

ANIMATION

WORLD

May 1997

• MAGAZINE •

Vol. 2 No. 2

Commercials Issue

Profiles of:
Acme Filmworks
Blue Sky Studios
PGA

Karl Cohen
on (Colossal)'s
Life After Chapter 11

Gunnar Strøm's
Fumes From The Fjords

An Interview With Aardman's Peter Lord

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Cover: Image from Aleksandra Korejwo's *Tammhäuser* commercial for The Austin Lyric Opera. © Acme Filmworks.



Words From The Publisher

by Ron Diamond

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself, and to share some of the background that motivated me to publish *Animation World Magazine* and motivates me still in our great and growing venture. I would like also to introduce my esteemed partner in AWN, and co-publisher, Dan Sarto. Dan is our technical guru and the spark behind the creation of the magazine.

We have just begun our second year in publication, successfully reaching people in more than 100 countries who all share a common interest, animation. We are connected by our fascination, appreciation and enthusiasm for the many ways animation has come to enrich our lives.

I can recall a pivotal television series offered in the early 1970s that forever changed my perception of what animation could be. The series, entitled *The World of Animation*, was hosted by Jean Marsh and aired on Los Angeles' public television station, KCET. The strong impressions it made remain with me today. The program featured work from the great National Film Board of Canada and from Eastern Europe.

Unlike the conventions of animated series television and the feature films of the day, these short films only needed remain true to themselves and not to a premeditated "bible" of character poses and in-character scenarios. With each new short would come the anticipation that a new story or expression could challenge the foundations of my earlier animation reference.



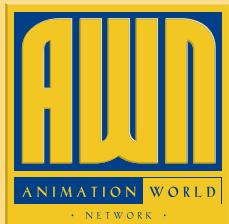
Ron Diamond

My fascination with animation has brought me along an unusual path. Though I have not animated since some exercises in film school, my

commitment to the medium has permitted me to distribute works to international audiences and to produce for directors whom I greatly admire. I invite you to learn more of my recent history in the article in this issue on Acme Filmworks.

It's as though there is a force within us Animation World citizens to choose this road less traveled, and to take on this ominous and sometimes ridiculous task. The work is often tedious, complicated and few (very few) people who work in this business make a grand income. The answers to the question of "why?" are as varied as the numbers of the ones asking the questions. For me, it is confirmed every time I see a great animated film with a message well told, art well illustrated or a beautiful blend of poetry and motion. To participate in this process, my time is well spent.

To work within the system that creates the extraordinary is a blessing. Our lives are enriched by working with the imaginative individuals who painstakingly envision to move the medium forward. From the day I became involved professionally in animation, I've found animators to be a special



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We welcome our new Editor- Heather Kenyon.

breed. I am immensely impressed by their humanity, creativity, originality and by their dedication to their art. I consider myself privileged to have worked and to continue to work with so many talented people.

With this issue, we also introduce an important change at Animation World Magazine. It is my pleasure to announce that Heather Kenyon has joined our staff as Editor-in-Chief. Heather has worked at Hanna Barbera for the last 3 and 1/2 years, where she vacates the position of Manager of the Production Information Department. I invite all who wish to send Heather a message (email: heather@awn.com) to congratulate her on her new position at . We are grateful to Harvey Deneroff for his contributions to

the magazine during our first year, and we wish him success on all his future endeavors. Please read Harvey's farewell in this issue's Editor's Notebook. Wendy Jackson continues her expert and devoted work as Associate Editor of Animation World Magazine, and also continues to compile the Animation Flash.

It is my intention as Publisher of Animation World Magazine to celebrate all forms of animation, studio and independent, student and professional, commercial and art from all nations. Great works need to be viewed and discussed, and it is my continued desire to promote works representing diversity in animation.

-Ron Diamond



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

by Harvey Deneroff

Commercials

Many years ago, when I was an undergraduate student, I volunteered to transcribe an oral history interview with Hans Richter, one of the pioneers of European avant garde cinema, whose career dated back to the 1920s. One of the comments that stuck with me all these years was about an offer he had to make an advertising film. As he considered himself first and foremost an artist, he refused. Later, after seeing the resulting film, he was so delighted that he changed his mind towards working on such films.

Today, with the likes of Spike Lee making commercials, the specter of selling out has long since vanished; this has been especially so for animators, as early on advertising films became an integral part of the animation mainstream. Thus, the commercial studio run by Julius Pinschewer in pre-Nazi Germany was certainly one of the most important in that country's animation history, employing the likes of such artists as Oskar Fischinger, among others; Fischinger, in turn, supported his experimental work by working on commercials, including the first one to employ marching cigarettes (well before Lucky Strike did in the US in the early years of TV). (The key role advertising films have played in helping establish animation in Norway is vividly illustrated elsewhere by Gunnar Strøm's discourse on "Fumes From the Fjords.")

In the United States, Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss) probably had his professional introduction to animation via advertising films, long before his books were adapted to the screen

and he wrote the original story for *Gerald McBoing-Boing*. With the coming of television, commercial studios liberated many animators from dependence on a few theatrical studios as their almost sole source of employment; in fact, spot houses came to dominate the New York animation industry in the 1950s. It was an era when such studios as UPA and Hanna-Barbera set up major commercial operations and which is still looked upon as a Golden Age of American Animated Commercials.

Today, with the worldwide toon boom going on apace, commercials no longer play as dominant a role in the global animation community; nevertheless, it remains a fertile ground for creativity. In the US, this can be seen by increasing use of independent animators and designers by such companies as The Ink Tank, J.J. Sedelmaier, Klasky Csupo, Duck Soup and Acme Filmworks. At the same time, digital studios like Blue Sky and Rhythm & Hues use their commercials as a means to push the boundaries of CG animation. With the proliferation of new TV channels around the world, many of whom are advertiser supported, animated commercials would seem to have a very long life ahead of them.

Thirty

With this issue, I am stepping down as Editor of *Animation World Magazine* to devote more time to various personal projects, including *The Animation Report*, the industry newsletter I edit and publish. It is not a decision I took lightly, as editing *Animation World Magazine* has been a wonderful experience, which

enabled me to both explore the heady possibilities of publishing on the Internet, as well as establishing an exciting new journal of news and opinion.

Before departing, I would like to offer a few observations about Internet publishing. When I was first approached about this assignment in late 1995, the conventional wisdom held that none of the old rules for putting together a print magazine really applied to online journals. After all, given the nature of computers, readers probably had little tolerance for articles of more than a few hundred words. Needless to say, we ignored this sort of opinion and realized that Internet publishing gave one the freedom to publish longer articles without having to worry about printing costs. (As it turns out, the most popular article in the first issue was Barry Purves' "The Emperor's New Clothes," a delightful essay on computer vs. stop-motion animation, was one of the longest we ran in our early months. In fact, it continued to be read widely for several months after it became a back issue!) The same freedom to print longer articles, without worrying about running up printing bills, has also allowed us to print articles in an author's original language as well as in English.

But perhaps the most important freedom I found is the ability to reach out across international borders and address the worldwide animation community with unparalleled ease. And it is for this opportunity that I will always remain grateful.

-Harvey Deneroff

Letter to the Editor

May 1997



Defining ASIFA

The following letter was sent in reply to Chris Robinson's "To Be or Not To Be An ASIFA-Sanctioned Festival," which appeared in the January issue of Animation World Magazine. Additional letters responding to this article were published in the February 1997 issue.

March 27, 1997

To: Animation World Magazine,
Hubert Tison, Chris Robinson,
Michel Ocelot, David Ehrlich and
Gunnar Strom.

Dear People,

I feel compelled to write regarding remarks made by Mr. Chris Robinson concerning the organization that is ASIFA, and its relevance to its members, of whom I am one. Frank discussion is necessary, but I find Mr. Robinson's remarks couched more in mean-spiritedness and less in frankness. This correspondence appeared on the ASIFA web site and AWN.

It was the following remark that I took particular offense to in light of the tone of his correspondence: "Why do you think societies have sprung up across the country in Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg and Calgary? Because it is impossible for ASIFA Canada to represent their needs." Mr. Robinson should have done some research before making a statement like this. I can't speak for the founding members of the

Quickdraw Animation Society (which is probably who he was referring to in Calgary) regarding the formation of the Society in 1984, relative to ASIFA (so I don't see how Mr. Robinson can,) but I can speak as an active producing member (since 1990) and operations coordinator (since 1994) at QAS.

QAS is primarily a non-profit, artist-run animation film production co-op with equipment, facilities and support services for artists to produce their personal visions in animation. Nowhere in the ASIFA literature that I have does it say that they are a production facility. QAS is not an international organization, with international connections, nor could we ever hope to be, but through ASIFA we can approach a level of recognition that we could never achieve on our own. This is how ASIFA-Canada can meet our needs. QAS is taking positive steps to get more involved; by actively encouraging our members to become ASIFA members, contributing to the newsletter, networking with other ASIFA members, possibly hosting an ASIFA children's workshop in connection with our Quick Kids programming, and so on. I will not allow QAS to be used as ammunition by Mr. Robinson in his attack against ASIFA. ASIFA has been very Eastern-centric, but it is changing, and QAS is assisting with that change. It's unfortunate that the change is occurring when there is little funding to support it.

As far as ASIFA-Canada separating into chapters, oh yes, that's just what we need, yet another bunch of under-funded organizations duplicating services that could very likely wither and die for lack of financial and volunteer support. The current political and financial climate does not adequately support the arts and culture organizations that already exist. Regional representation on the board of ASIFA-Canada would be a much better idea, with assistance provided through the existing animation groups. QAS already actively supports and encourages cooperation with other organizations (locally with EM/Media Gallery and Video Production Society, and the Calgary Arts Facility Association; provincially with the Alberta Media Arts Alliance Society (amaa-s); and nationally with the Independent Film and Video Alliance (IFVA), and ASIFA). There is a large national push for more support and communication among arts and culture organizations; it takes some effort, but it will create a strong and united community, instead of further fracturing it by creating splinter groups. Why does Mr. Robinson want to encourage something that is in direct opposition to these nationally supported initiatives?

As operations coordinator at QAS, I am continually struggling (as are most non-profit arts organizations) to maintain our current structure of support for our members, including (under)paying staff, pay-

ing rent, maintaining very expensive film production equipment, subsidizing members' productions through our volunteer credit program, creating and administering courses, workshops and programming relevant to our members, and these concerns have to be addressed all year, year after year. I make a little over \$11,000.00/year, QAS is forced to operate on \$70,000.00/year, so the money has to be spent in exactly the right places. We have the potential to do so much more, and we are very frustrated.

There are a great many arts professionals in this country that are becoming completely demoralized because of the constant battle for funding. The people with the power and the money don't seem to care, there is a lack of philanthropic initiative in the business community, individuals have to spend their time volunteering and supporting health and educational institutions to provide basic human needs so there is no energy left over to devote to supporting arts and culture. This is a horrible and unhealthy social climate that arts groups are constantly facing. Support to QAS through the Canada Council has been frozen for the last five years, and up until last year we were the lowest funded Media Arts group. ASIFA-Canada funding was cut completely in 1996. This is something that I wonder if Mr. Robinson was aware of. I think his energy would be put to better use lobbying the government (on all levels) to increase funding to arts and culture, instead of constantly complaining to ASIFA about having no funding. Perhaps ASIFA could assist with this lobby, as this would directly support and encourage the art of animation on its most basic level - funding for the creation

and presentation of animated films. QAS is involved with an initiative with the IFVA regarding a National Cultural Emergency Day of Action on April 26, I can and do sympathize with Mr. Robinson regarding his funding concerns with the Ottawa Festival, and I would be very interested in seeing a copy of the festival budget; I have some opinions but would like to present some educated feedback. I have no experience in festival operations, but I have practical experience in theater, which operates on similar grounds, and with organizing large events for QAS. I also know how I, as an animator, would like to see films presented.

As far as ASIFA being an "old boys network", these "old boys" are established professionals in the field who have the time, inclination and finances to be able to provide the necessary support. I respect and admire these people for their accomplishments and have no qualms about their ability to represent me as an ASIFA member. QAS has a policy of inclusion regarding styles and concepts of animation, and we appreciate and promote our proud heritage, as does ASIFA. Among the Pantheon of Gods at QAS are Norman McLaren, Frederic Back (I would suppose that would make Hubert Tison a prophet), Jan Svankmajer, Chuck Jones, Ray Harryhausen, Ishu Patel, Caroline Leaf, John Whitney, the Brothers Quay, Tex Avery. . . . Our Valhalla is quite crowded. If Mr. Robinson truly wants to be an advocate for animators, doesn't he realize he is already in the perfect position to be that as a festival director?

I would love to be a representative on the board of ASIFA, but when I am not working at my job, with the attendant committee and association meetings and volun-

teerism, I am trying to make my films. My partner, Kevin Kurytnik, and I are in production on a 15 minute cel animation project that has been in development for the last three years, and I myself have two projects in development. We do not work for a studio, we are self employed, we get limited financial support through grants (when the application is successful, the competition is enormous), money we don't use for food or rent goes back into our films, so there is little left for other concerns.

Having spoken to many ASIFA people over the course of this last year, they are coming to understand the approach to animation here at QAS, and stylistic preferences aside, they respect and appreciate what we are accomplishing. I was also surprised to find that many of them are facing the same issues that animators at QAS have or are now facing, those being struggling with completing their latest film, waiting for funding for their next project, fighting with producers, looking for distributors; it's encouraging and discouraging at the same time. These are the people who sit on the ASIFA boards, it is very clear that they understand what animators face. I don't see them as being out of touch at all. It is Mr. Robinson who appears thus. If he purports to speak for animators, is he himself an animator? Who is he, where does he come from, why is he involved?

It is also quite evident that animation as an artform is very fractured. "Independent" has a different definition depending on who you talk to, most industry people appear to have absolutely no clue about animation as fine art and only seem interested in where the money is made, fine art animation is not properly or adequately presented at festivals except in token

gestures, and the younger generation doesn't seem to care about animation unless it's hooked up to a computer, or steeped in cynical pop culture posing and smugness. Communication and education is so important to bringing more understanding and appreciation of the vastness of animation, and this is what the festivals should be, a huge conduit for communication and education, along with entertainment, networking, and good will.

ASIFA as an organization needs time to recover from the financial hit it took. M. Tison stated in his June 1996 editorial for the newsletter that "newly established governmental budget policies have had negative repercussions...we are a bit shaken by the financial constraints..." You'd think that Mr. Robinson would be more compassionate towards this reality as he is facing the same thing with his festival. Most organizations have to rethink and restructure in order to survive now, and these things take time. What is needed is positive critical discussion and action. I suppose through Mr. Robinson's efforts we

are now entering into these discussions, however I take issue with his reasons and methods. His criticism of ASIFA with regards to the Ottawa Festival might have some validity if this was a recurring problem from past festivals.

As I understand it, this is his first experience as director of the Festival, perhaps there was not proper orientation by the last director in outlining the responsibilities of ASIFA with regards to the Festival, there was obviously a lack of communication and this goes both ways. I was very disappointed with the whole experience of the Ottawa Festival. There was no indication that the people who are the main focus of the Festival, that being the animators, were ever really welcome. The workshops were of absolutely no relevance to me as an independent animator. The layout of the trade fair, with the dreadful crush of humanity before and after screenings, had no appearance of advance planning, there were some rude and distracted volunteers more concerned with where the donuts were than with assisting festival participants. Yes they were volunteers

(and thank the gods for them!) and their duties can be brutal, but there is a certain level of professionalism expected. I appreciate Mr. Robinson's position as a first time director and am fully aware of the work involved with a festival of this caliber, but I think he should make a more informed analysis of a situation before leveling the type of criticism he has.

The Ottawa Festival is the perfect venue for active support and advocacy of animators and their passion. Mr. Robinson's attitude does a disservice to the festival. With the approach that he has taken with ASIFA I can only see him alienating the people whose support he should be actively encouraging. I hope further rational dialogue continues that results in a stronger ASIFA-Canada and a better Ottawa Festival, and I offer my participation as needed.

Sincerely;

Carol Beecher
ASIFA Member

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Acme Filmworks: The Independent's Commercial Studio

by Marcy Gardner

In the fast-paced world of commercials, it's hard to find room for vision and individualism. But a unique production company that emerged from the fields of production and distribution of independent animation is changing all of that, and the result is some of the most innovative commercial work in the industry.

Acme Filmworks was founded six years ago with the intent to represent independent animators to prospective ad agencies. The role that this Hollywood-based company has since assumed far surpasses that original mission. "My vision for Acme," explains the studio's co-founder and now sole owner Ron Diamond, "was to find opportunities for the world's most creative animators. I wanted to work with these brilliant directors to help them not only find work, but better understand the commercial arena of the entertainment industry."

A Global Studio

Something of a cross between a commercial animation house and a talent agency, Acme matches animator/directors with advertising agencies. Representing over 40 directors from 8 countries, from a pool of talent that has no consistent venue in North America, Acme is a veritable global studio. Acme has no "house style," as its directors use

of techniques spans across all media: photo-collage, scratch-on-film, paint-on-glass, traditional character-cel, stop motion, clay animation, special effects and title design. "Any one director does not carry the company," says Diamond, "It is a collective group of directors, and that, I think, is a formidable force." The roster of Acme directors reads something like an animation festival catalog, with award-winning animators on the list such as Bill Plympton, John Kricfalusi, Caroline Leaf, Paul

So how did an artists' rep turn into a full-scale production company? "Ron scours the globe looking for the world's best artists, the freshest styles and newest techniques," comments Bill Plympton, an Acme director and cult-status independent animator. Diamond's background in both production and distribution (For six years, he produced the International Tournee of Animation) lends itself to his unique line of work. "I decided that I wanted to be an integral part of production,

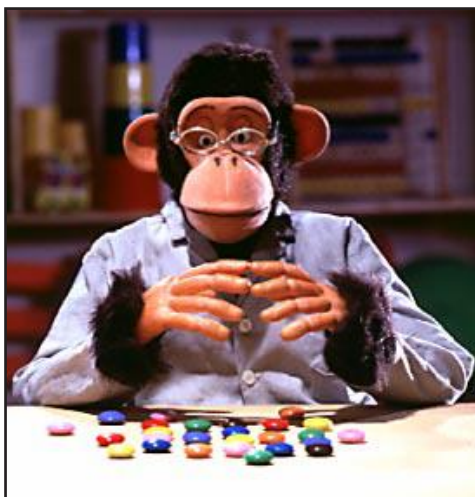


Raimund Krumme's Levi's spot, *Trading Secrets*.

and Menno De Noojier, Wendy Tilby, Sue Loughlin, Raimund Krumme, Cordell Barker, and Christoph and Wolfgang Lauenstein, to name a few.

not just sell already completed productions," says Diamond. And integral he is, traveling around the world to stay on top of everything. At any given time, Acme projects can be going on in several locations

around the globe. Some animators, like Montreal-based Wendy Tilby, choose to fly to sunny Los Angeles to work on projects at Acme's Hollywood production facility, which is host to an Oxberry camera stand, Avid editing system and other equipment. Others, like stop-motion animators Christoph and Wolfgang Lauenstein in Germany, prefer to work out of their established studios to execute their unique stop-motion work.



Monkey Business, Christoph and Wolfgang Lauenstein's stop-motion animated commercial for Nestle.

The more exotic the location, in fact, the more involved in the production Diamond seems to get. "The first major commercial we did was with the Russian director Mikhail Aldashin. It was a tumultuous time in Russia. Ad agencies want, above all, a sense of security and comfort. I just found it prudent to become directly involved in the production aspect." And it seems that coordinating productions all over the globe is Diamond's rather extraordinary talent. Says independent animator and Acme director Caroline Leaf, "Ron is able to pull things together over large distances. In this respect he's fearless. I remember the first time I got a call for a job from Acme. I was heading off to Australia.

By the time I landed in Brisbane, Ron knew exactly where I could rent a 35mm camera."

Animation With A Purpose

One of Acme's best known campaigns is its award-winning series of commercials for the Levi's Jeans for Women campaign. The campaign consists of five animated spots, three of which were done by Acme for the San Francisco-based ad agency Foote, Cone & Belding. The three Acme spots include *Woman Finding Love* by Simon Mulazzani & Gianlugi Toccafondo, *Woman with a Purpose* by Susan Loughlin, and, most recently, *Trading Secrets* by Raimund Krumme. Each spot has a distinct, separate style and storyline.

Mulazzani & Toccafondo's *Woman Finding Love* depicts a young woman floating out in the stratosphere, flying over hills of lust, loneliness and rejection. As the music soars, she glides into a landing on a fat, red heart. The fluid, painterly style that the Italian duo are known for quietly seduces the viewer. Yes,

this woman happens to be wearing a loose representation of Levi's jeans, but other than that, there is never a mention of product endorsement in the spot, which ended up winning the 1995 "Best Commercial" prize at the Annecy animation festival, as well as nominations for an Annie Award in 1993 and a Clio in 1994.

"We don't want to have any films fall in the forest and not get heard." - Ron Diamond

Trading Secrets, German director Raimund Krumme's Levi's spot, features a very different style of animation than the evolving line drawing the he is known for in his independent films such as *Passage* and *Borderlines*. *Secrets* borrows stylistically from the Surrealist movement and psychedelic art. Here, two women appear as if in garden of Eden, a landscape of stylized leaves and flowers where words turn into clocks, and pens into butterflies. As the women journey through the garden, a love letter is written, a



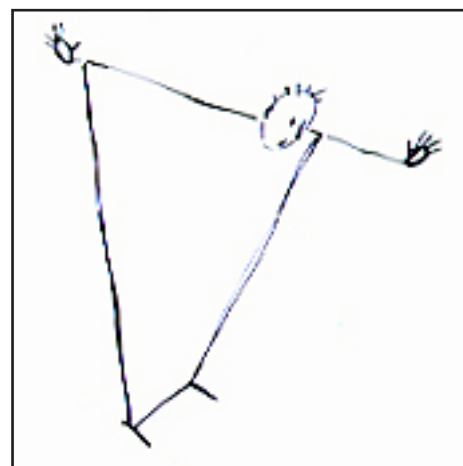
Mulazzani & Toccafondo's award-winning Levi's spot, *Woman Finding Love*.

boy grows out of the girls head and they float away on a giant soccer ball of butterflies. We do see Krumme's sensibility here, in that the evolution of the storyline seems to evolve from the drawings themselves. "Things evolve by drawing them," comments Krumme, "This is where my ideas come from. Because my drawings sometimes only gain meaning through motion, it is possible to change content by adding a new movement." Krumme also directed four spots for the Got Milk? campaign last year, and is currently residing in Los Angeles, working on a short film.



Sue Loughlin's Brenda & Elaine Go Shopping spot for Weight Watchers.

In British animator Sue Loughlin's Levi's spot, *Woman with a Purpose*, a line-drawn woman saunters through a looming, pulsing cityscape. The lines snake and flow around her as she walks, purposefully and undaunted, through traffic, a basketball game, and enormous buildings. She approaches a gigantic door which she proceeds to open and march on through. Loughlin's powerful spot garnered her a Clio award in 1994. Her exquisite line quality can be seen again, in her 1995 Amnesty International spot *Human Rights*. The spot features a woman, Free Spirit, who has been torn away



Raimund Krumme's commercials for the Got Milk? campaign are akin to the style of his independent films.

from her family and unjustly placed in prison. Through symbolism, the artwork communicates the horror of this violation, without so much graphic depiction that the spot would not be able to air. Loughlin is a graduate of The United Kingdom's National Film and Television School, where she developed her trademark expressive flowing line style in her student films, *Grand National* and *The Occasion*. Loughlin recently completed three new animated commercials for Lowe & Partners, SMS agency's client, Weight Watchers. Now airing nationally, these light, humorous spots depict two women scheming up ways to lose weight or disguise their bodies.

A Resource for Animators

Dwindling arts funding throughout the world necessitates resourcefulness for independents today. For most Acme directors, producing occasional commercial work is the only way for them to support their independent filmmaking endeavors. Caroline Leaf, who is currently teaching at Harvard, and who has animated several award-winning animated films such as *Two Sisters*

and *The Street*, says "As an independent animator, I can just drift along for years and no one notices. The commercial work buys time for the independent work." She adds that the commercial jobs help her to hone her technique, commenting, "I enjoy the structure of working within 30 seconds. Every frame counts and [that] forces me to be really clean with the animation." Bill Plympton, who is now finishing up his second independently-produced feature film, *I Married A Strange Person*, says, "I would not be able to do the features I am doing without Ron."

"As an independent animator, I can just drift along for years and no one notices. The commercial work buys time for the independent work."

-Caroline Leaf

Acme has no staff animators, and thus has a fairly low overhead. Diamond comments that "The ability to pay directors star salaries is certainly an advantage of low overhead. One director said to me that



Paul Fierlinger's animated documentary, *Drawn From Memory*.

after completing a spot she was going home to their country to buy a house—not just place a down-payment, but to buy an entire house.”

In addition, Diamond wants to assist animators in finding new outlets for their work. He says, “My desire is to create means by which these directors can do well financially, and also develop their ideas into long form works.” Branching out from the commercial arena, in 1995 Acme produced *Drawn from Memory*, a feature length animated autobiography by Paul Fierlinger, which was funded by American Playhouse, and is now airing internationally in

Canada, Germany, Sweden and Holland. “We don’t want to have any films fall in the forest and not get heard,” jokes Diamond, stressing that he wants to see the animators obtain the benefits of exposure that long form provides.

Speaking with Ron Diamond, one gets the immediate impression that he greatly admires and respects the artists he works with. Just describing their styles, he speaks with excitement. “I decided a while back that life is short, and that I’m going to spend my time working with creative, nice people,” he says, “I really value working with people I respect and enjoy. Not many people



Acme director David Wasson recently completed 98 Pound Weakling, a 2-D animated spot for the Texas Board of Tourism.

get that opportunity.” He also feels rather protective of these animators, reflected in his passion for protecting the animators’ rights to the original artwork and characters that they create for the work they do through Acme. “The way I see it,” he says, “animators

are hired to make a 30 second commercial, not 720 individual frames of artwork. So why should the agency have the rights to this artwork? If they were hiring them to create 720 individual frames of artwork, than they should be paid substantially more than they are.” This rather convincing argument seems to be holding sway with the ad agencies themselves. “These artists don’t have a pension plan, and historically the studios they’ve worked for have shown them little loyalty,” he adds. And if it sounds like Diamond is up on his soapbox about this issue, he just might be. “Last year my wife gave me a great gift,” he muses, “It’s this Nineteenth century shipping crate that has a label on it for ‘Acme Soap.’ So, now I have my very own actual Acme Soapbox for proclaiming our philosophy.”

Acme is currently producing a series of three animated commercials for Starbucks Coffee with director David Wasson, as well as three animated spots for Nabisco with director Scott Ingalls.

Marcy Gardner
(cruelladeville@msn.com) currently works in the Children’s Programming Department at WGBH in Boston, where she answers Arthur’s fanmail and is compiling a library of kid’s ideas, art, films/videos, and projects for the new Zoom show. Previously, she worked on Sesame Street.

Colossal Pictures Proves There is Life After Chapter 11

by Karl Cohen

News stories about Disney are often read around the world, but major news about lesser-known animation companies are generally ignored by the national press. One important story that was treated this way began to unfold in public on April 3, 1996, when a *San Francisco Chronicle* story headlined, "Colossal Pictures to Lay Off Third of Staff." This item was followed by rumors that the company, one of the mainstays of the local animation industry with a staff of about 130, had given pink slips to 40, 80, 100, and even 120 people.



Drew Takahashi.

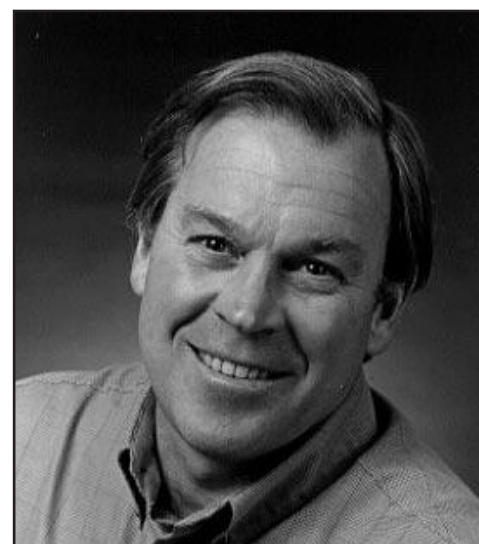
In June, the *Chronicle* ran a second story noting that they had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The rumor mill in the local film community seemed to go out of

control, and there was even talk that Colossal was out of business. The company issued press releases explaining what had happened, but it appears the writers at several trade magazines didn't read them. Instead, they continued to run stories that suggested things at Colossal were bigger and better than ever.

**"We can look forward to being out of Chapter 11 in 1997."-
Drew Takahashi**

Colossal Pictures, founded in 1976, became well known in the 1980s for its innovative design work. They pioneered the "Blendo" look that featured a mixture of different animation techniques in the same commercial. Often live-action footage or photo montage was included along with stop-motion, cel animation, drawn images and other techniques. They also developed the *Liquid Television* and *Aeon Flux* shows for MTV and are known for their music video productions for The Grateful Dead, Bobby McFerrin, Primus, The Kronos Quartet, Peter Gabriel, and other stars. Their feature work includes titles for such films as *The Black Stallion*, *Peggy Sue Got Married*, and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. They did special effects for *The Right Stuff*,

Top Gun, *Demolition Man* and *Running Man*. In addition, they provided animated sequences for *Natural Born Killers* and *Tank Girl*.



Brooks McChesney.

Today, Colossal has undergone an extensive reorganization. They consolidated their operations in one building (there had been four). They now have around 40 people on staff, including a new CEO. And Drew Takahashi, co-founder and chairman of the board states that, "We can look forward to being out of Chapter 11 in 1997."

What Happened

The changes that occurred in 1996 were triggered by the rising costs of doing business and a drop in the company's profits. The animation division had become so large it was not only unwieldy to

run, but it was also less profitable than it had been in years past. It was decided that it was wiser to restructure the company and concentrate on the development of well-written and designed projects, rather than maintain all the facilities and staff needed to execute animated, live-action, and special effects work. It was especially difficult to maintain its high-tech computer facilities, which require constant upgrades of equipment and software. It was decided that, in the future, they would send the production of their animated and special effects work out to other companies.

Colossal eventually consolidated their activities at their facility at 101 15th Street in San Francisco. Prior to doing so, they had their ink and paint service in one building, the animation department in another, the administrative office, a design department and other services in a third, and stages, a model shop, a camera room and other facilities at a fourth location. Drew Takahashi says it was just too much to keep track of.



Pictogram.



One of Colossal's 20 Locomotion IDs.

Just as important to the survival of Colossal as the downsizing of space and staff were the changes made in the administration. Gary Gutierrez, who co-founded the

company with Takahashi, left to pursue his desires to work as a filmmaker on feature productions, though he still remains a stockholder and believer in Colossal's future. Takahashi has stepped aside as president and CEO to become chief creative officer and chairman of the board of directors. In December, Brooks McChesney was appointed president and CEO.

McChesney, who was trained as a lawyer, has over 20 years management and production experience with hi-tech and interactive companies. Before coming to Colossal, he was chief operating officer of IVN Communications Inc., a leading producer and distributor of nonfiction programming.

McChesney says he is refocusing the business end of Colossal to have a more aggressive account management strategy. He states that "We're now more proactive in communicating our menu of services to our client base, so that an advertising account will use us for their Web site design and an online company will discover we can help

them with their advertising needs."

"Drew Takahashi is Colossal," according to one staff member. His greatest strength is conceiving and designing projects. The company's international reputation for producing remarkable works, noted for their unique style and techniques, is based to a large extent on his visions. Unfortunately, in recent years he had little time to devote his energies to the company's creative side. With the addition of McChesney, Takahashi can once again concentrate on what he does best, design and direct projects.

Colossal's Latest Work

Proof that the company is alive and well can be seen in their latest demo reel. It isn't as long as past reels, but it is just as exceptional, with one outstanding work on it after another.

The company's latest commercials for Coca-Cola demonstrate Takahashi's brilliance as a creative director. The two spots are so dramatic that many people are unaware that one was done with

CGI and the other all live-action without any added special effects. Both are journeys through unusual spaces. For viewers, it isn't how they were done that is important. What is important is that they are visually captivating and reinforce the sponsor's name.

Pictogram, the computer-generated Coke ad, flies around some sort of carnival ride of the future. We go past fascinating statues, gadgets and other cool things. There is no hard sell on the soundtrack, instead we see some 40 or 50 Coke bottles in the landscape, often seen as tiny decorative details. The product's name is sometimes barely visible on a bottle or sign for a fraction of a second as we fly on by. The end result is our seeing the company's name 15 or 20 times in 30 seconds. It is a sophisticated, understated spot that just might win a few major awards.

The live-action Coke spot takes us inside a Rube Goldberg-style vending machine, starting with a closeup of a finger pushing a button and ending with an inflated rubber glove deflating, allowing the bottle of Coke resting on it to tip over and pour its contents into a glass. In-between marbles, eggs and steel balls roll and bounce about, making levers move within this unique device. It should also be an award winner.

Other recent work by the company includes a series of 20 IDs for the launch of Locomotion, a new South American satellite animation channel. Using a variety of styles, including stop-motion and computer graphics, they created a wonderful series of images. Most are full of primary colors and are done with really hot, contemporary-style graphics. Charlie Canfield, who joined the company in 1991 after working at Industrial Light & Magic



Colossal's spots for Turner Classic Movies animate the style of Edward Hopper paintings.

(ILM), directed them.

Another remarkable work, directed by Canfield, is a show opening for the Nickelodeon channel, that again combines both traditional and digital animation. It shows a blue rhino galloping across a pink cloudscape at sunrise. He stumbles on a couple of clouds and they fall over to reveal they are painted billboards with scaffolding holding them up from behind.

What (Colossal) does best is tell short stories—whether it be via a commercial, a station ID, a TV show or an interactive project.

My favorite work on the reel is a stunning work done for Turner Classic Movies, directed by Tom McClure, which brings the paintings of Edward Hopper to life. We watch sunlight and shadows move across his cityscapes as people sit or stand quietly, or slowly move about. The city seems to be a series of 3-D sets or models, but it still maintains the look of Hopper paintings. All this is set to a period song about the sunny side of life. The music and visuals works so well together that they must make a lot of viewers happy when they see this art that

moves.

Colossal's latest work to be released is *Koala Lumpur*, a CD-ROM created and directed by Jamie Baker, that provides an interactive journey in the form of an action-adventure movie with lots of outrageous humor. A review on Gamesite said that Colossal's collaboration with Brøderbund produced "mature themes, high-brow remarks, and twisted puzzles with the finesse of a seasoned Las Vegas lounge comedian. And their routine deserves a loud round of applause . . . a unique fun experience . . . they pull the trick off so well that it's hard to believe that *Koala Lumpur* is the company's first attempt at a comedy title."

Future Plans

Executive Producer Jana Canellos said that restructuring the company, so that its energies are directed toward design work, has resulted in a smaller company, where everybody can work together. She also feels that Colossal is a great working environment where people help each other, and what they do best is tell short stories—whether it be via a commercial, a station ID, a TV show or an interactive project.

Canellos expects the company will expand by creating work for new markets, including the Internet. She stresses that regardless of what the format is, the main thing Colossal is concerned about is a commitment to quality.

A look at Colossal's current projects gives some idea where the company is headed. For instance, they are developing an online show with Microsoft, material for kids' programs on the MSN (Microsoft Network), an interactive TV project with a major entertainment company, and interstitials for a major TV

network. They are also doing live-action TV commercials for GTE Mobilnet and animated IDs for the Discovery Channel.

Colossal also has its own award-winning Web site at <http://www.colossal.com>, so check it out if you want to learn more about one of San Francisco's great companies.

Colossal's Successful Children

When a company gets into trouble, the press rarely mentions what happens to the people who join the ranks of the unemployed. Fortunately, the San Francisco Bay area's film and animation industries have been growing rapidly in recent years; so, when Colossal laid-off most of their production staff in 1996, there were lots of jobs available. Some former staffers joined well-established companies like ILM, Zoetrope and Pixar. Others joined studios that were formed in the 1990s by Colossal alumni, while others formed their own companies after the layoffs.

The live-action, animation and special effects companies in the Bay

Protozoa, Six-Foot Two Productions, Story Animation Company, and Wild Brain. They may not be well known yet, but all are producing excellent work, suggesting working at Colossal was an important educational experience.

Wild Brain, founded in 1994, has grown rapidly. In 1996, when Colossal laid off most of its staff, Wild Brain was busy doing commercials for Nike and Coke, animation for HBO, Warner Bros. and the Cartoon Network, plus CD-ROM projects, including *Flying Saucers* for AnyRiver Entertainment, an animated *Carmen Sandiego* sequence for Brøderbund, and the *Green Eggs and Ham* CD-ROM for Living Books. About half of their staff of 80 are former Colossal people, including 10 taken on within two weeks of their being laid-off last year.

Wild Brain is run by a consortium of directors (John Hays, Phil Robinson, Gordon Clark, David Marshall and Robin Steele, plus producer Jeff Fino) who use a combination of traditional and computer animation, other new technologies, and overseas animation service. Their work stresses storytelling and

entertainment. At present Phil Robinson is directing *Ferngully II*, a direct-to-video sequel to the Bill Kroyer film. They are also developing an Internet situation comedy for



Wild Brain's Humpty Dumpty Nike Spot.

the Microsoft Network, a pilot for Nickelodeon, and several commercials (Coke, Mainstay, etc.).

EyeHeart is Siri Margerine's new animation art production service, doing ink and paint, backgrounds, illustrations, and whatever else your art needs might be. For many years, Siri headed the art production services department at Colossal. Clients include Colossal, Story Animation, Wild Brain, Curious Pictures, Maverick, and other local studios.

MessyOptics is an animation camera service founded in 1996 by Carter Tomassi. The company uses Colossal's late model Oxberry animation stand, with a 16mm and 35mm cameras, featuring all the bells and whistles needed to do complex productions, including a motion control system. Tomassi also has a 35mm high contrast film processor for doing pencil tests and a 35mm Steenbeck flatbed. His clients include Colossal Pictures, Curious Pictures, Lucas Arts, Pacific Data Images, Spellbound Productions, Story Animation Co., and Wild Brain.

Maverick is an animation studio formed in 1996 by Robert Valley and Jeanne Reynolds. Valley, who animated for Colossal; he was in Korea working on a *Aeon Flux* with Peter Chung when he got word that Colossal had filed for Chapter 11. Maverick was formed when he



Aeon Flux.

area run by former Colossal employees include: Cartoonland, Complete Pandemonium, Curious Pictures, EyeHeart, Kirk'sWorks, Little Fluffy Clouds, M5, Maverick, MessyOptics,

returned to the States. They have been kept busy doing work for Wild Brain and Curious Pictures.

Little Fluffy Clouds is a computer animation firm run by Betsy de Fries and Jerry van de Beek. Since opening up in June 1996, they did the character animation for Colossal's recent *Pictogram* Coca-Cola spot, created the destruction of the universe in 60 seconds for *Rocket Science*, and animated a 30 second *Mainstay* commercial for Wild Brain. The company is now working on another Coke commercial for Colossal.

Media Concrete is a multimedia design company run by Stuart Cudlitz, George Consagra and Anne Ashbey-Pierotti. They had formed Colossal's New Media Division in 1990 and opened Media Concrete in March 1995. Working with Colossal, they produced the *Koala Lumpur* CD-ROM for Brøderbund. Other interactive projects they have worked on are *Play-Doh Creations* for Hasbro Interactive and *Ruff's Bone* for Living Books. They have also worked on projects for IBM, Hewlett-Packard and others using new technology for communications.

Story Animation Company is run by Robert Story, who worked at Colossal as a producer. He recently produced a commercial for GTE Mobilnet and is presently producing the animated segments of a Sears commercial.

Protozoa, a motion capture company, was founded in 1994 by Brad de Graf with seed money from Motorola. They are a spin-off of Colossal's performance animation, which had developed the Moxie character in 1993 for the Cartoon Network. The company's focus is on character-based, real-time 3-D entertainment. Their projects also includes *Squeezis*, a cartoon game

for Inscape. Dev, the real-time animation character seen daily on MSNBC's *The Site* is also theirs. They have also been developing other unusual characters for a variety of media, including TV and the World Wide Web. Clients include Microsoft, Silicon Graphics Images, and MSNBC.

Six-Foot Two Productions is Robin Atherly's company in Larkspur. Atherly has provided computer ink and paint services for several CD-ROM producers.



Colossal alum Kirk Henderson worked on the Orly's Draw A Story CD-ROM for Brøderbund.

Curious Pictures, a New York-based company founded in 1993, opened a branch office in San Francisco on September 4, 1996. It is headed by Colossal alumna Anne Smith, who worked her way up through the ranks from production manager to senior managing producer of animation. Curious Pictures' first projects here were a Nike commercial directed by Robert Valley and three stop-motion ads for a superstore in the Midwest that were directed by Denis Morellia. Both directors had also worked at Colossal.

Kevin Coffey's **Cartoonland**, founded in the 1980s, does several interesting projects each year.

They've produced the animation for the *Star Wars Chess Game* for Software Tool Works and the animation for *Doonesbury Flashbacks: 25 Years of Serious Fun* for Mindscape. Coffey has also worked on several TV commercials for such national clients as Coca-Cola, Nabisco, Van de Kamp, General Mills and others.

Kirk Henderson, who was one of Colossal's top directors in the 1980s, works as an art director/designer/ animator under the name **Kirk'sWorks**. Last year, he completed *Orly's Draw-A-Story* for Brøderbund. Prior to that, he helped develop the *Toe Jam and Earl* CD-ROM.

The influence of (Colossal) Pictures on the local animation and effects industry is immense. For the over 20 years since the company was founded in 1976, Colossal has pushed animation forward as an exciting art form and medium for communication. They helped develop the skills of hundreds of production people and have helped make the Bay area one of the most exciting production centers in the country.

Karl Cohen is President of ASIFA-San Francisco whose first book, *Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators*, will be published later this year. He also teaches animation history at San Francisco State University.

Ray Tracers: Blue Sky Studios

by Susan Ohmer

The essence of computer animation is making something that is fabricated look real. Artists and technicians in this field devote a considerable amount of time to analyzing which elements give objects and people their realistic appearance. Textures, movements, shading, and sound all have to be carefully designed to create convincing replicas. In the opinion of the executives and animators at Blue Sky Studios in Harrison, New York, light rays are the most important element for creating believable computer images. Their numerous commercials and recent feature film work demonstrate convincingly that understanding how light affects objects is essential to creating quality computer graphics.

Blue Sky Studios, Inc. was founded in February 1987 by a group of people who had met at MAGI/SynthaVision while they were working on Disney's *TRON*. Each brought a range of talents and experience that proved valuable in dealing with the emerging business of computer animation. David

Brown, the company's current President and CEO, had been a marketing executive with CBS/Fox Video. Alison Brown (no relation), now Vice President of Marketing and Sales, came from advertising and special effects. The company's creative director, Chris Wedge, was an animation artist and teacher. The most unusual member of the group, and the man responsible for the distinctive look of its films, is Eugene Troubetzkoy, who holds a Ph.D. in theoretical physics from Columbia University. He and former NASA engineer Carl Ludwig developed the proprietary software and renderer that give Blue Sky its competitive edge.

In a recent contest for computer animation, judges rejected a commercial that Blue Sky had produced for Braun's electric shaver, because they believed it had been shot on film.

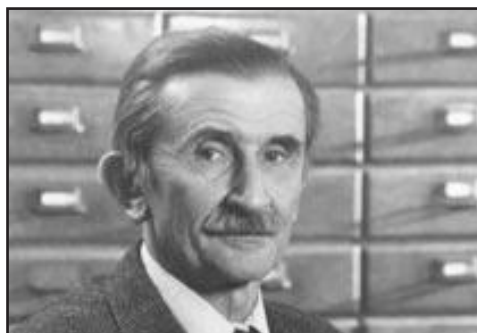
The Physics of Animation

Troubetzkoy's approach to animation grew out of his earlier work in nuclear physics. Just as physicists study the way beams of electrons and photons bounce off other subatomic particles, Troubetzkoy analyzed how light rays interact with everyday objects. He and Ludwig studied how objects appear in a variety of lighting conditions, from bright to shaded, under clouds or under water, and looked at how

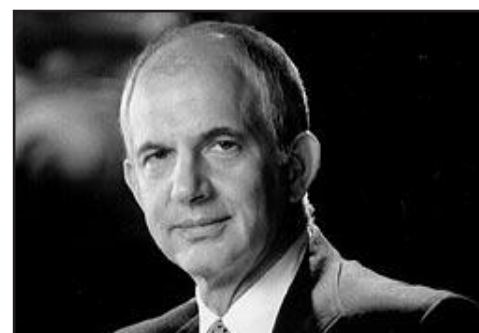
they reflect or refract light rays. Using complex algorithms and over 50,000 lines of computer code, they wrote software that mimics these conditions in the computer.

Blue Sky's trademark software CGI Studio™ also defines the material properties of an object—its density, transparency, and degree of reflectivity—and how these will be affected under different light conditions. When the company is working on a computer graphics project, technicians shoot a reference object, often a small white sphere, within the light environment that will be seen in the film, to study its illumination. Blue Sky's research team combines this information about light conditions with data on the material properties of the object to replicate how its surface would look under those conditions. The company's patented renderer, under the supervision of Carl Ludwig, then models that surface texture onto the animated object, in a process called ray tracing.

Is It Real, or Is It Animation?



Dr. Eugene Troubetzkoy.
Photo by SAWWhite



David Brown.
Photo by SAWWhite.



The CG Braun shaver in question.

The result of the ray tracing process is high quality photorealism that even fools professionals. In a recent contest for computer animation, judges rejected a commercial that Blue Sky had produced for Braun's electric shaver, because they believed it had been shot on film. The surface texture of the metal object is so convincing, and the movements it makes so smooth, that it's easy to see how they were deceived.

In addition to the Braun commercial, Blue Sky has used its proprietary software to create over 200 spots for other clients, including Chrysler, M&M's/Mars, General Foods, Texaco, and the U.S. Marines. Last Christmas the company produced a holiday commercial in which three ornaments rappelled off a Christmas tree to drink a can of Pepsi that had been left for Santa. This story of toys staging a heist is reminiscent of the birthday party scene in Pixar's *Toy Story*, and in fact the spot originated at Pixar, before the studio announced it would stop making commercials and concentrate on feature films. Pixar recommended Blue Sky for the assignment—solid confirmation of the studio's prestige within the industry.

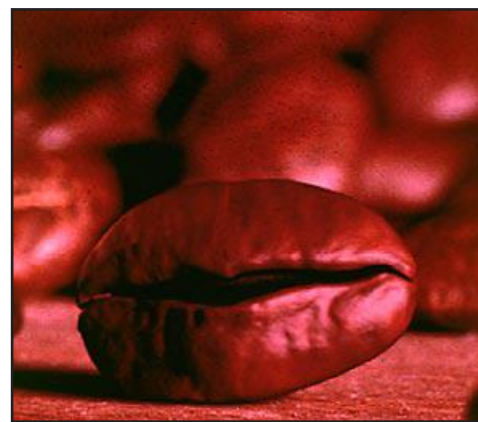
Blue Sky commercials are also distinguished by the believable personalities they develop for inert

objects. Two spots that illustrate this accomplishment were created for Chock Full O' Nuts coffee and Bell Atlantic. The ad for Chock Full O' Nuts features a coffee bean which is animated so that the crease in its side looks like a mouth. The talking bean, who speaks with a distinctive Texas drawl, lavishes compliments on his hostess for serving what sounds like an outrageous combination of foods: artichoke hearts in hot fudge sauce, butterscotch pepperoni soufflé, and brownies filled with garlic. The bean's flattery vividly illustrates the point that this coffee is so smooth it can "complement" any meal. In the Bell Atlantic commercial *The Big Deal*, the main character is a telephone cord whose plastic connector becomes an anthropomorphic head. The cord, nicknamed "Jack" by animation director Carlos Saldanha, takes on a childlike personality as it acts out the various services the phone company offers, tapping its "foot" to illustrate Call Waiting, and splitting into a three-pronged wire to demonstrate Three-Way Calling. Its engaging personality and energetic responses demonstrate Blue Sky's desire to cut through the flood of commercials that bombard us and create a memorable impression. "Not all inanimate objects become characters." Alison Brown comments, "What gives them personality is their ability to awaken our emotions."

Several Blue Sky executives who worked in advertising in the 1980s have drawn on their industry contacts to build new business, and the company also has two reps working with agencies on the East and West coasts. Scripts and storyboards for commercial spots usually originate with the agencies, because their clients have to approve the concept. Since advertisers thor-

oughly research the demographics for a product, they know what kind of audience they want to reach, and often choose animation for products that appeal to younger, more hip viewers. For example, Blue Sky created the promos for the Nickelodeon channel, in which a mound of orange glop takes on various shapes before emerging as the cable channel's distinctive "Nick Boy." The creative, offbeat use of animation in these spots is in sync with the type of viewers who watch Nickelodeon.

Advertising agencies vary in their willingness to use computer animation. Though some, like BBDO Worldwide, who commissioned the Pepsi commercials, appreciate the fact that computer animation can make the impossible possible, others prefer to continue working with traditional filmed spots and stop motion or puppet animation. At times, Blue Sky produces test footage on spec, to convince clients of the value of its approach. A recent sequence for Hershey's Kisses showed how the foil-covered chocolates could take on believable personalities. However, as the popularity of computer animation increases, and it appears more frequently in Hollywood films, Blue Sky is finding a growing demand for its talents.



Chock Full O'Nuts' talking coffebean.



The Pepsi Christmas Tree spot.

Hollywood's Calling

In addition to its commercial work, Blue Sky has begun producing animated sequences for feature films, a line of work which it plans to expand. The studio's most famous accomplishment in this area is the animated cockroaches it created for Warner Bros.' feature-length version of the MTV short *Joe's Apartment*. The film, released last summer, stars a twenty-something resident of a dilapidated apartment in New York's East Village who shares his living quarters with roaches—thousands and thousands of roaches. The production used 3,500 live insects as well as rubber puppet and stop-motion replicas.

“Not all inanimate objects become characters. What gives them personality is their ability to awaken our emotions.”

Blue Sky's contribution to the film consists of 13 minutes of computer animation, in which the insects do things that would have been too difficult to portray with puppets or stop motion. To achieve a realistic appearance for the creatures, supervising animator Carlos Saldanha studied the texture and motions of live roaches to get a shiny, wet look and to make the movements of their legs and antennae seem natural. The most memorable sequence in the film, however, has

nothing to do with realism. In the musical number “Funky Towel,” roaches rap dance on a bar of soap, waltz around the rim of a toilet, and perform a water ballet right out of Busby Berkeley. Some scenes in the film even mix live roaches with their computer-generated counterparts. Thanks to Blue Sky's careful rendering, they're hard to tell apart—until the computer insects start to sing. “Funky Towel” has won numerous awards from festivals in Spain, Canada, England and most recently, Monaco.

To promote its feature film work, Blue Sky President and CEO David Brown meets often with studio executives in Hollywood, and the company has recently hired several people with substantial experience in film production. Director/designer Jan Carlee joined Blue Sky after serving as Director of Digital Imagery and Computer Animation at Don Bluth's animation studio in Ireland. Amy Jupiter, Executive Producer and Vice President of Production, worked on special effects for *Apollo 13* and was responsible for production activities on special films for Disney theme parks in Florida, Paris, and Japan. Blue Sky has also recently hired Henry Anderson, who animated the Coca-Cola “Polar Bears” and worked at Digital Domain and Rhythm & Hues. The studio's current projects include computer graphics sequences for Twentieth Century Fox's *Alien: Resurrection* and for the Bubble Factory/Universal project *A Simple Wish*, both slated for release later this year.

Alison Brown feels that working on both commercials and features gives the animators the “opportunity for a breather.” If they tire of working on the character in a feature sequence, they can switch over to a shorter commercial project for



Alison Brown. Photo by SA White.

change of pace. A recent tour of Blue Sky's spacious facilities revealed a work space that is carefully designed to allow both creative concentration and friendly interaction. Offices are separated by dividers that are high enough to provide privacy when animators want to focus on their computer screens, but low enough so that when they stand, they can talk comfortably with colleagues. Many animators have lined their offices with wind-up toys and merchandise from *Star Wars* and other special effects films. The 30,000 square foot building also houses communal meeting spaces with couches and chairs, and a glass-enclosed kitchen and dining room. Animators use Silicon Graphic workstations, and there are digital editing suites and a studio where they can project footage for critiques.

1997 marks the ten year anniversary of Blue Sky Studios' founding. The company now employs 85 people, and continues to expand as the demand for high end computer animation increases.

Susan Ohmer, Ph.D. teaches courses on new technologies in the Graduate Media Studies Program of the New School for Social Research in New York City. She can be reached at susohm@aol.com.

Fumes From The Fjords

By Gunnar Strøm

Norway is a small country, with only four million inhabitants. It is more famous for its cold climate and beautiful, mountainous fjords scenery than for its film industry. If you are lucky, an animation fan abroad may have heard about Ivo Caprino and seen a couple of Norwegian shorts at international animation festivals, but that's it. Very few, even in Norway, know that this little country has a long animation film history going back to the early 1900s.

As is the case today, when it came to animation, Norwegian cinema screens were dominated by American animation before WWII. The first animation stars in Norway were in the *Colonel Heeza Liar* (Norwegian name *Mentulant*), and *Kapten Grogg* series, made by the Swedish pioneer, Viktor Bergdahl. In the 20s, Felix the Cat was the leading star, and from the late 20s up until today, Mickey Mouse and the other Disney stars have ruled the ground.

Eventually, the American cartoons influenced Norwegian artists to make animated films themselves. As far as we know, the first animations made in Norway were done by Sverre Halvorsen in 1913, in Kristiania (Oslo), using a chalk on a blackboard technique. As with his fellow animation pioneers, Ola Cornelius and Thoralf Klouman, he was a cartoonist in the press, and his films such as *Roald Amundsen on the South Pole* were based on the same subjects, and characterized in the same way as his newspaper drawings. These artists did also drawings for postcards and advertisements in the press, and most gave up animation

because funding was difficult to find at the time.

A New Venue: Cinema Commercials

From the middle of the 1920s to the late 30s, more than 100 animated cinema commercials were made for Norwegian companies. One-third of them were made for the Norwegian tobacco company, Tiedemann. Among the directors that made them are leading international names as Viktor Bergdahl, Hans Fischerkoesen and Oskar Fischinger.

The start of animated commercials for the cinema goes back to Germany and Julius Pinschewer in 1912. In Norway, advertising films appeared in the cinemas at least from the early 1920s, and there was a boom in this format in the latter half of the decade. The 1920s were a golden time for the advertising industry in Norway. From soap to cigarettes, customers were attracted to products with animated commercials. Static advertising slides had been screened in the cinemas for years, but in 1922, the leading cinema advertising agency, Sverdrup Dahl, organized screenings of advertising films. Now suddenly there was money for production of animated films in Norway, but those first animated commercials were still made abroad. The Danish cartoonist and animation pioneer Storm P. made a few margarine commercials in the early 20s. The domestic boom didn't happen until 1927, when nearly 100 different cinema commercials were screened in Norwegian cinemas, at least 13 of which were animated. This high production volume con-

tinued into 1928 and into 1929.

Most of the early Norwegian animated commercial films were made with a combination cut-out and drawing technique, similar to the style of 1920s advertising films by Danish animators Viktor Bergdahl and Storm P. These two pioneers were likely the inspiration for many Norwegian animators from the late 1920s. The use of cels was still very limited at the time, but sometimes the animation was more advanced, with animation drawn directly on multiple printed cards with static backgrounds, a technique Bergdahl used in his *Kapten Grogg* films. Some films were done as object animation in combination with live action, by artists such as the Méliès-inspired filmmaker Ottar Gladtvæt, but most of his films were animated cartoons with extensive use of additional cut-out technique.

The quality of the early Norwegian animation varied quite a lot. Some of the films are surprisingly good, like the 1927 *Fiinbeck er rømt* produced by Gladtvæt. But most of the films suffered from being made in small studios, on simple equipment, and by animators who were still in the beginning of their learning processes. These films did impress the Norwegian cinema audience in 1927, but after Mickey Mouse entered the Norwegian screens at the end of the 1920s, Norwegian advertisers preferred live-action commercials over the "second-class," Norwegian produced animation. This is probably the main reason why the boom in Norwegian animation suddenly came to an end in 1929.

In the mid 1930s, however, ani-

mated cinema had a resurgence in commercials. The films were extremely professionally made, but most were made outside of Norway, mainly in Germany and in Czechoslovakia. But these were at least films made for Norwegian goods and companies. Some of the films were just dubbed Norwegian versions of foreign films, but most of them included longer segments specially made for the Norwegian version, and some of the films were directly made for the Norwegian market.

These films differed in techniques and style. The animated cartoon still dominated, but the standard has made the transition from paper to cels. Many of the films were made with puppets and other objects. Twenty of them were made in color, and at least three were abstract films in the style of Oskar Fischinger. The Norwegian advertising industry was professionalized in the 1930s. At the Stockholm exhibition in 1930, the Scandinavian advertisers were introduced to the German Bauhaus movement, and this influenced the industry in Norway both to professionalism and a new visual and artistic approach. This can be seen in many of the animated cinema commercials made in the late 30s.

Competition Breeds Inventiveness

J.L.Tiedemanns Tobaksfabrik is still the leading company in the Norwegian tobacco industry, as it was in the early 1920s. But its position were seriously threatened by American and British companies who, through the tobacco trust, BATCO Ltd., tried to conquer the Norwegian market. BATCO filled Norwegian newspapers and magazines with advertisements for their products. With Tiedemann in the lead, the Norwegian tobacco producers had to answer. While the competition in the press was tough,

it seems that Tiedemann & Co ruled the ground quite alone in the cinemas.

Heading the advertising department at Tiedemann was Halvor Andresen. Back from marketing studies in the U.S., he introduced modern marketing to Tiedemann. With Andresen at the helm, the advertising costs at Tiedemann increased every year through the 1920s. In 1930, the BATCO war ended with the founding of a new company with both Tiedemann and BATCO as owners. This is another reason for the lack of animated Tiedemann commercials in the early 1930s, but it doesn't explain the total stop in the making of animated cinema commercials in 1930.

From the middle of the 1920s to the late 30s, more than 100 animated cinema commercials were made for Norwegian companies.

The Medina Campaign

In the late 1930s, Tiedemanns advertising costs reached a new peak, and so they became more inventive in their advertising approach than ever. The introduction of a new cigarette brand (named Medina) made them try new ways of marketing. In the radio you could hear Medina classical concerts, and in the cigarette packets you would find collecting cards with haute couture from Paris. Tiedemann even invested in an autogirocopter, a plane that was used only to promote the Medina cigarettes. Meanwhile, in the cinemas, they used animation to sell the Medina brand.

The Medina films are quite different from the tobacco commercials of the 20s, both in style and content.

While the Teddy films from the late 20s were humorous and quite rough in their approach, the Medina films are delicate, elegant and even abstract. As a parallel to the American Lucky Strike campaign, Medina was Tiedemanns attempt to make women become smokers in the name of sophistication, elegance and equality. It worked.

It is strange today, when people don't even smoke on television any more, and when all advertising for tobacco and alcohol are strictly banned in Norway, to see how these films tried to convince the audience of the advantages of cigarette smoking. The inventiveness, quality and variation in animated audiovisuals of these spots are quite impressive, and the commercials are among the best advertising films ever shown in Norway. Maybe it is because a product like tobacco, which is difficult to sell with plain objective arguments, ultimately stimulates the advertisers to use their fantasy and imagination.

A teddy bear and the mascot of the cigarette brand, named Teddy, was a character in several animated commercials for Tiedemann. A typical Teddy film is the 1927 *Teddy's biltur* (*Teddy's Car Ride*) animated by Niels Sinding-Hansen for Walter Fyrst, one of the leading filmmakers in Norway before WWII. In this spot, Teddy is out driving, and he gets hungry, so he stops at a restaurant. While he's inside eating, a man flattens all four tires on Teddy's car. Out from the restaurant, Teddy discovers what has happened, stops to think, and lights a cigarette. Inventively, he blows four smoke rings that fit nicely around the flat wheels of his car. He smiles and drives happily away on his wheels of smoke. Sinding-Hansen made at least five more films for Tiedemann in this style in 1927-28.

Ottar Glatvet

The leading advertising filmmaker in Norway before WWII was Ottar Glatvet. He made mostly live action films, but as an experimental cameraman, he used clever object animation and different stop-motion effects in many of his films. He also produced animated cartoons and cut-outs, but I'm quite sure he didn't make the drawings himself. Some of the Glatvet films are perhaps animated by the pioneer Sverre Halvorsen, with whom Glatvet collaborated on some animated shorts in the early 1920s. Some of the other films were made in collaboration with Ths.W.Schwartz, a filmmaker influenced by Viktor Bergdahl.

Glatvet also collaborated with major animators outside of Norway. He made three films for Persil washing powder, in collaboration with Julius Pinschewer, and in 1927 he produced *Fiinbeck har rømt* (*Jiggs Has Escaped*.) The film, based on the characters from George McManus' comic strip *Bringing up Father* shows how the character's wife manages to bring Jiggs back home and keep him indoors by offering him the finest Tiedemann tobacco for his pipe. This film is very professionally done, and I'm quite sure that Viktor Bergdahl, who made advertising films in Stockholm at this time, is the animator behind it. I also believe that this film influenced other Norwegian animators in their work, since many of the following films were made in the same technique, but less professionally. It is possible that a Norwegian animator, like perhaps Schwartz, worked in Stockholm as an assistant to Bergdahl and brought this knowledge to Norway afterwards.

Kalifens hemmelighet (*The Kalif's Secret*) was made in 1936 by Desider Gross in Prague, according

to the censorship cards. It's a two and a half minute, classic black and white cartoon with excellent animation. Like *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* from *Fantasia*, it is based on Goethe's ballad "Der Zauberlehrling." *Kalifens hemmelighet* is a beautiful example of music and animation fulfilling each other. In the spot, the kalif is controlling the movements of cigarettes by playing his flute. After dancing for him, the cigarettes offer themselves to the kalif, who lights them and enjoys his smoke. The kalif's apprentice tries the flute while the kalif is away, and he loses control over the cigarettes. When the kalif gets his flute back and retains control, he realizes that he shouldn't keep the cigarettes just selfishly for himself, but share the joy with others.

It is strange today, when all advertising for tobacco is strictly banned in Norway, to see how these films tried to convince the audience of the advantages of cigarette smoking.

Gasparcolor

The theme in the 1938 puppet film *Et orientalsk kunststykke* (*An Oriental Piece of Art*) made by Gasparcolor in Berlin, has several similarities with *Kalifens hemmelighet*. The way the Medina cigarettes are presented in the end of the two films, looks similar. Uniquely, *Et orientalsk* is a well-made puppet film where an oriental sorcerer is about to entertain a sultan. After several failures, he finally succeeds when he magically offers the sultan a Medina cigarette.

En sigarett - en Drøm (*A Cigarette - A Dream*), produced in 1938, is also produced by Gasparcolor, but in black and white. It is a very ele-

gant film with long, smooth camera movements over gracious ballet dancers in an oriental castle. Harp and piano are providing the music and the whole scene is wrapped in elegant live action cigarette smoke! The moral in the end of the spot says that if you smoke Medina cigarettes, you will have wonderful dreams, as shown in the film. To me, at least parts of this film look like they were made on a pin-screen, but the film is not registered as an Alexeieff commercial. *En sigarett - en Dream* also has close similarities to a 1933 German cigarette commercial called *Schall und Rauch*, which is credited to Hans Fischerkoesen. *En sigarett - en Drøm* is probably made by Fischerkoesen. Could then, Alexeieff have been involved?

The Fischerkoesen studio probably also made the 1938 commercial film, *Sjakk Matt* (*Chess Mate*), a fourth film credited to Gasparcolor. This is a funny cartoon in which the white players have lost a game of chess to the red, but the white king obtains new powers when he gets a taste of a Sorte Mand Cigar. Accompanied by a jolly song in Norwegian and helped by seducing cigar smoke, the white players take their sweet revenge.

Not credited to Gasparcolor but definitely made with the Gasparcolor process is the abstract 1936 film, *En fargesymfoni i blått* (*Color Symphony in Blue*). This is really a shortened version of Oskar Fischinger's *Komposition in Blau* from 1935. Some scenes from the original are missing, and the end has been re-done using the logo of the Medina cigarette in the animation. According to an article in a Norwegian trade journal, such abstract color commercials were quite common in Norwegian cinemas, but in 1938, such color experiments were "replaced by more eas-

ily understandable visuals with proper content.”

Who Made These Films?

A lot of questions around the production history of these commercial films still have to be answered. According to the Norwegian censorship cards, Desider Gross and Gasparcolor were the two main producers of animated commercials for Norwegian companies in the late 1930s. I know of 18 films credited to Desider Gross, and 11 that are produced by Gasparcolor. But in Prague, they don't know of this Desider Gross company. And Gasparcolor was a color film patent, not a production company. Why, then, are these films credited as being produced by Gross and Gasparcolor?

Fischinger made *Komposition in Blau* in 1935, and after he left Germany, it was made into commercials for at least 17 different cigarette brands all over Europe by Tolirag, Fischinger's collaborators. Several of the films credited to Gasparcolor are definitely made by Fischerkoesen, while others like the 1938 *Radiator-revolusjonen* were made for Phillips by George Pal in the Netherlands. Why then, this miscrediting?

In Czechoslovakia, several of the pioneers of Czech animation like Karel and Irena Dodal, George Pal and Hermina Tyrlova made excellent commercials in the 30s for the production company Propaga-Film. BATA, the leading Czech shoe producer and industry giant, made its own film company to produce commercials, and Czech avant-garde filmmakers worked for them. Several of the Desider Gross films I have registered are for shoes. Are these films originally made by BATA? Maybe Desider Gross and Gasparcolor served as agents for advertising films aimed for the Scandinavian market.

A lot of research is still to be done in this area. In any case, these films represent a most interesting collaboration between filmmakers and advertisers in different European countries. Several of the leading animators before the war were involved in the production of the films, and different versions of the same films have been made for the different countries. The films themselves are wonderful examples of high quality art which still make an impression among advertising films today.

These [advertising] films themselves are wonderful examples of high quality art which still make an impression among advertising films today.

With the beginning of World War II, both shortage of goods and the new political situation made an effective stop in the production of these advertising films. After the war, it was impossible to re-establish this fruitful collaboration between Norwegian companies and animated filmmakers in Germany and Czechoslovakia. What was probably the most fascinating period in the history of Norwegian animation was over.

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The PGA Connection

by Gene Walz

If a monument is ever built to Richard Condie and the Manitoba animation scene, there's an old animation stand in a converted National Film Board storage room that would make a perfect centerpiece.

Now that Richard Condie has switched to computers for *La Salla*, the old black-piped machine may have few glory days left. But its role in the creation of a local industry is undeniable.

Without that animation stand, there probably would not be a "Richard Condie—Two-time Oscar Nominee." No *Getting Started*, no *Pigbird*, no *Big Snit*. No *Cat Came Back* by Cordell Barker either, nor *Get a Job* by Brad Caslor. And certainly no *Primiti Too Taa* by Ed Ackerman.

As an oversized hand-me-down, the animation stand has had a weird history. Like a lot of Canadiana, it has passed from private to public ownership. From Neil McInnes and Kenn Perkins to the Winnipeg Film Group and now the Manitoba Society of Independent Animators.

The key link in the chain of ownership is Kenn Perkins, the king of the K-Tel commercials. It was at his animation shop that Caslor and Condie and others learned their craft. They swept floors and emptied wastebaskets there just to get a chance to see their own cels under the old Bolex on the animation stand's housing.

Perkins bought the stand from its original owners, Phillips, Gutkin and Associates (PGA) just

when it seemed that a glorious era in Winnipeg animation history would disappear without a trace.

Caslor and Condie swept floors and emptied wastebaskets just to get a chance to see their own cels under the old Bolex on the animation stand.

The Biggest and the Busiest

During the 1950s, PGA was among the biggest and busiest animation companies in North America. The fact that they accomplished this in Winnipeg, a city of maybe 300,000 people on the bald-headed Canadian prairie, speaks volumes about the creativity and can-do stubbornness that Condie also exhibits.

PGA got into the animation business in 1952, four years after John Phillips and Harry Gutkin formed a partnership to provide live-action industrial films and print advertising for western Canadian businesses. John and Harry were quite an unlikely pair. Gutkin, from Winnipeg's ethnic North-end, was a commercial artist and part owner of a publishing firm. Phillips was the son of a renowned Canadian painter, a quiet man from the WASP-ish south end of town, who left a job as layout man and fashion photographer for the Eaton's catalogue.

The Canadian equivalent of the great Sears and Montgomery-Ward catalogues, the Eaton's cata-



From a PGA spot for Toastmaster bread.

logue was one reason that postwar Winnipeg was the third largest advertising center in North America. It was a good time and, oddly, the right place for PGA to get into the animation business.

PGA did not make cartoons, although they eventually tried to. Their first venture was a movie for the co-ops that were so important to western Canadian development. *What's Co-operation All About?* was a 20-minute promo, half animation and half live-action. Rudimentary in design and structure, the movie is significant mainly because it forced PGA to invest in the now-historic animation stand.

The specifications for the stand came from the National Film Board. That's more ironic than it appears. For, at the time the NFB was justly famous for Norman McLaren's cameraless (and, therefore, non-animation stand) films. The stand was then built by a local mechanic for Trans-Canada Air Lines (now Air Canada), Harold Rasmussen. Sturdy and reliable as a DC-3, the stand would be crucial to PGA's main claim to fame—hundreds of animated TV commercials.

PGA's First Big Break

When CBC television became a coast-to-coast operation in 1954, PGA had already done some local animation ads. So Harry Gutkin took a sample reel to Toronto to impress the Libby's Foods' executives who had just agreed to sponsor National Movie Night on CBC television. With an amusing storyboard for "Quality Control Cops," PGA got their first big break.

The ad proved more expensive than PGA estimated. With no lab facilities in Winnipeg, many flights had to be made across North America to complete the soundtrack, the editing, the final print, and



A mexican-themed spot for B.F. Goodrich.

even the live-action "sandwiches" inserted between the animation sequences.

To complicate matters, a fast-talking "Hollywood producer" convinced PGA to substitute milk for tomato juice in the black-and-white product closeups. A budget-busting trip to New York to mask and recolor each individual frame of the insert saved the account.

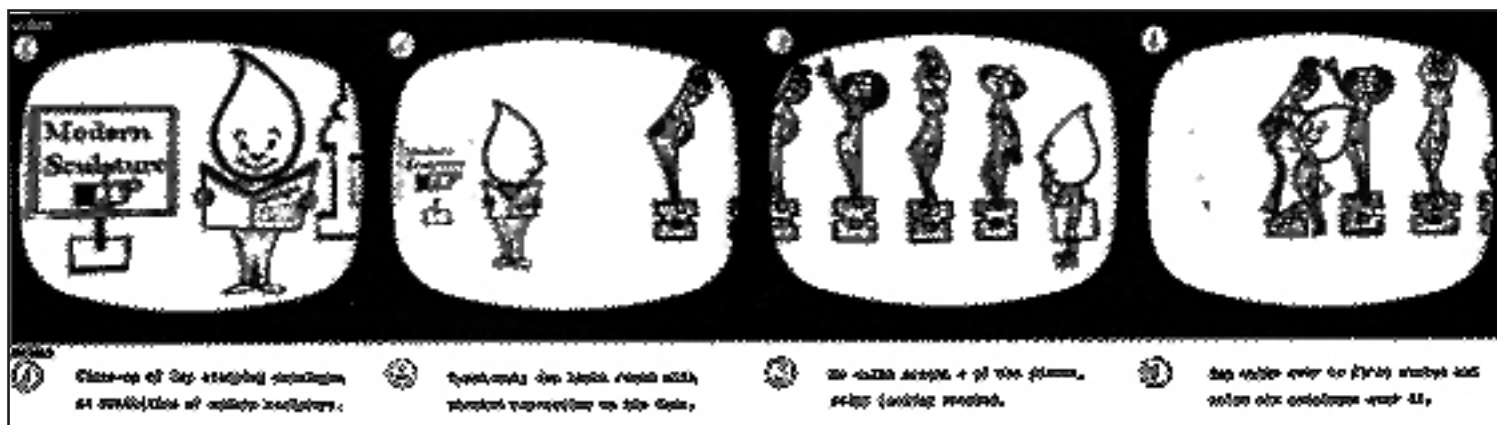
Although all ads were done in the spare UPA animation style popular at the time, PGA still needed between 25 and 30 animators working full-time to keep up.

The golden age of PGA was between 1954 and 1960. The company was making between 15 and 30 TV commercials per month. Major accounts included Windsor Salt (whose "Wacky Bird" was Gutkin's favorite creation), Esso Oil, the Bank of Canada, Simonize Wax, Blue Ribbon Tea, Kellogg's Cereals,

Chrysler Canada, Kraft Foods, and Libby's. Most of these were exclusively Canadian ads; Kraft, Libby's and Windsor Salt spots also appeared on American television.

Although all ads were done in the spare UPA (United Producers of America) animation style popular at the time, PGA still needed between 25 and 30 animators working full-time to keep up with the pace. Some of the animators came right out of local art schools and apprenticed on the job. Among those who worked at PGA and later went on to even better things were Barrie Nelson (who later set up his own animation operation in Santa Monica, California), Barrie Helmer (John Phillips's brother-in-law, who was recruited from the NFB), Jeff Hale, Jan Kamienski (who became a noted political cartoonist), and, perhaps most famous of all, Bill Mason (whose canoing and wolf films—especially *Cry of the Wild*—were among the best-selling NFB documentaries of all time).

PGA is also where Charlie



Storyboard for an Imperial Esso commercial.

Thorson ended his long career in animation. He spent three months here in 1956, drawing the "fuzzy bunnies" and other cute animals he had perfected as a character designer at Disney, MGM, Warner Bros., Fleischer, Terrytoons, Columbia, and George Pal Studios in the 1930s and 1940s.

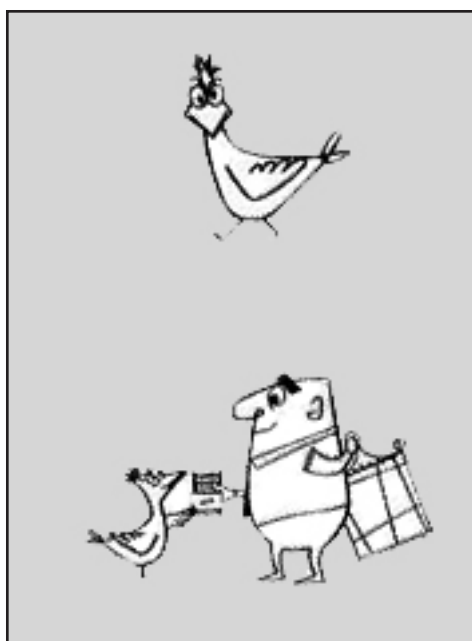
Most of PGA's talent, however, was imported from Europe. And this, plus a feature article in the prestigious Swiss magazine *Graphis*, led to a proposed trans-Atlantic alliance with John Halas and Joy Batchelor, England's premier animators of the time.

Beginning of the End

Harry Gutkin met John Halas in New York City in 1960, and the two worked out a plan to alternate production of a weekly cartoon. PGA created a pilot from a series of children's books that Gutkin had published and one of his animators, Ray Darby, had created before PGA was founded. The series was to be called *T. Eddy Bear*. The pilot was then included on a demo reel with Halas and Batchelor's famous *Hamilton the Musical Elephant* and a handful of commercials from both companies.

Although the menagerie of animals was cute and kookie and the UPA-style animation colorful and inventive, the sample vignettes were miscalculated and uninspiring. *T.*

Eddy Bear never found a buyer. It was the beginning of the end for PGA.



PGA's Wacky Bird spot for Windsor Salt.

With production costs rising and profit margins evaporating because of costly trips to labs outside of Winnipeg, PGA struggled throughout the swinging sixties. Twenty-second animated commercials took over 300 person-hours to complete; the average contract was for \$5,000 to \$6,000. Live-action could be done for about one-tenth of that.

The coup de grace came from the CBC. Canada's government-sponsored TV network ruled that it would no longer accept animated ads for products aimed at children. The CBC was convinced

that, "Animation was like a Trojan horse that secretly worked its way into children's minds." Cereal ads for *Coco Puffs* and *Rice Krispies* were the first to go. Everything else that was animated was somehow suspect.

So, in 1966 PGA merged with another local ad agency, Brigden's, and reluctantly abandoned animation for print advertising. Luckily, they found a local buyer, Kenn Perkins, for their trusty animation stand. That meant that animation in Winnipeg did not come to an abrupt end. For that we can all be grateful.

Gene Walz
(walz@cc.UManitoba.CA) is head of the film program at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. He is currently finishing a biography on character designer Charlie Thorson and is now editing a book called *Great Canadian Films*.



Making the Cel: A Profile of Women in Commercials

by Bonita Versh

The world of TV commercials. ... where 30 second megabuck monoliths litter the landscape, dedicated to the sole purpose of selling a product that many of us would not bother to buy if not for the stunning visual aides created by some smart-ass directors. . . . directors who have the foresight, the talent, the right agency, the right campaign, the best crew, the right producer, and, with any luck, the right budget to make a short, sometimes minuscule film. But a film never the less.

The short format of animated commercials is an avenue for all of the artists involved to get the hands-on training of making animated films from beginning to end—and get paid for it! One can quickly learn all styles of animation, from traditional to wacky, experimental to computer generated. When a director needs to get a difficult project done on time, he (yes, most directors are still male) wants the best, most dependable, most versatile artists available. Women have proven that there is no gender call here.

Commercial animation is a field in which gender is less important than talent. For women in animation, myself included, the commercial arena has sometimes been the only place where one could get

hired as an animator, assistant animator, or ink and paint person when all the TV series jobs were going overseas. That's not to say there isn't any prejudice around. A common myth among the men of the "old school of thought" is that women can't be funny.

You'd better not say that to Becky Bristow, Cynthia Wells, Sally Cruikshank, Peggy Yamamoto, Pam Cook, Pattie Shinagawa, Tissa David, Sue Kroyer, Sara Petty, Candy Guard, or Caroline Cruikshank, just a few of the many talented (and funny) women who have worked in the commercial arena at some point in their careers, and who have animated some pretty wild scenes.



Bonita Versh.

Women-Friendly Studios

While there are countless commercial animation houses throughout the country and across the globe, a few in particular that I'm familiar with have worked with notable women over the years.

A common myth among the men of the "old school of thought" is that women can't be funny.

Personally, I am grateful to Klasky Csupo Commercials for trusting my abilities as a director, and for championing other women directors such as Tamara Varga and Ingin Kim. I have a great crew to credit, starting with assistant director (now producer) Liz Seidman, executive producer Tim Bloch, assistant director/animator Renate Kempowski, as well as Jackie Ross, Lisa Cupery, Adam Byrd, Nancy Avery, Cristi Lyon, Kim Tatum and all other animators and assistants who help me look good!

Duck Soup Productions, a long established commercial house, has probably used every talented animator in Los Angeles at some time or another. In the early 1990s, they had an all-female animation staff that consisted of Peggy Yamamoto,



Lunchmakers, a recently completed spot directed by Bonita Versh as Jackie Smessart for Klasky Csupo Commercials.

Patti Shinagawa and myself. We did a slew of commercials for Duck Soup, including the award-winning 7-Up Dot campaign. Kunimi Tarada, their color stylist, is a master of cel animation. Beth Epstein, Duck Soup's assistant director, has a long history in the animated commercial world, starting back at Film Fare with Frank Terry. Recently, Duck Soup actually hired a female director, Maureen Selwood, who also teaches in the experimental animation department at CalArts. Producer Caroline Bates brought the studio into the 21st century with her computer expertise, and now Duck Soup is establishing itself as a cutting edge digital studio as well.

Playhouse Pictures, one of the oldest commercial houses in Hollywood, pays great tribute to Sterling Sturdevant, a female designer who established the Playhouse look in the 50s and early 60s, setting the commercial standard for the times. Years ago, Playhouse gave Sally Cruikshank, a wacky American independent filmmaker, a chance to direct, still a rare oppor-

Priscilla Olson, cel artist Diane Grider and technical director Celene Pecker. Star Toons, also out of Chicago, is headed by female producer Chris McClenehan. She mentions that the few women animators they've managed to train soon leave for the larger studios. This is a problem for all of the commercial houses.

Ron Diamond of Acme FilmWorks has been a real impetus for matching independents with sponsors. The list of artists he has produced commercials with reads like the "Who's Who" of the international festival circuit. This roster includes Caroline Leaf, Wendy Tilby, Simona Mulazzani, Aleksandra Korejwo and others. British director Sue Loughlin recently completed the third spot in Acme's series of cel animated commercials for Weight Watchers. Loughlin has directed several spots for Acme, including one for the award-winning Levi's animated series, a campaign which put Acme and many other studios on the map in the commercial world.

We can't talk about the L.A.

tunity for a woman in this business, unless you own your own company. Cynthia Wells, Becky Bristow, and Ruth Kissane are also alumni of Playhouse.

In Chicago, Calabash Animation Studios' producer Monica Kendall works with wonderful animators such

scene without mentioning Jane Baer, co-founder and head of Baer Animation Studio in Studio City. She founded Baer Animation in 1984, and has proven to be a formidable force in the commercial world, with clients ranging from Coca-Cola to Pampers and Starkist Tuna, they have established a reputation for a classical, what some might call "Disney" style. Cynthia Wells is an animation director who worked on several of Baer's M&M's spots in the early 1990s.

Wells, who has also worked for Warner Bros. and Fox Feature Animation, taught at CalArts, and created her own independent films, just finished up directing two commercials for Los Angeles-based Rhythm & Hues, a studio known for its' computer animation commercials and special effects. *Simon Says*, for Twizzler's candy, and *Bullseye*, for Kraft barbecue sauce, were both created with Rhythm & Hues' proprietary software. Traditionally a 2D animator, this was a first time computer animation experience for Wells, who is working on a new independent animated film called *A Shadow of Doubt*, a five minute trailer for a feature film concept which she expects to complete later this year.

Women Directors

Independent women filmmakers like Cynthia Wells are really breaking ground in commercial direction and animation. Commercials have given them a chance to perfect their art while being funded by a sponsor. As you can gather by now, reading the names of directors at various studios, the commercials industry is one in which talent travels. Anyone with more than a few years experience in the industry has worked at their fair share of studios, on a variety of projects and techniques.

Becky Bristow has worked with most of the major commercial houses, animating on countless spots including over a dozen of Frank Terry's Raid commercials. Bristow also influenced the careers of many a young animators during her five-year position as head of CalArts' renowned Character Animation department, which is now headed up by Frank Terry.

Kris Weber-Sherwood, a long time assistant director and producer, started her career at Spunbuggy, the historically significant commercial studio that started the careers of people like Frank Terry, Bill Kroyer, Bob Zambini, and even Gabor Csupo back in the late 60s and early 70s. Auril Thompson was Spunbuggy's color stylist, and is now known as a legendary inker from Warner Bros. Sue Kroyer also got her start at Spunbuggy, and is now well known throughout the industry as one of the top directing talents. With her husband Bill Kroyer, Sue is currently working on development for Warner Bros. Feature

Animation. Talent surely runs in Sue Kroyer's family. Her sister, Karen Johnston has run her own animation studio, Karen Johnston Productions in Racine, Wisconsin for 20 years.

For women in animation, myself included, the commercial arena has sometimes been the only place where one could get hired as an animator, assistant animator, or ink and paint person when all the TV series jobs were going overseas.

Up in Vancouver, Debra Dawsen has designed for Marv Newland's International Rocketship for 15 years. Vancouver and Canada in general boast a large population of independent women filmmakers. Caroline Cruikshank (no relation to Sally,) a Canadian and a graduate of Sheridan College, went to London and gained an outstanding reputation as a commercial director, working with Richard Williams, Pizzaz Pictures, Richard

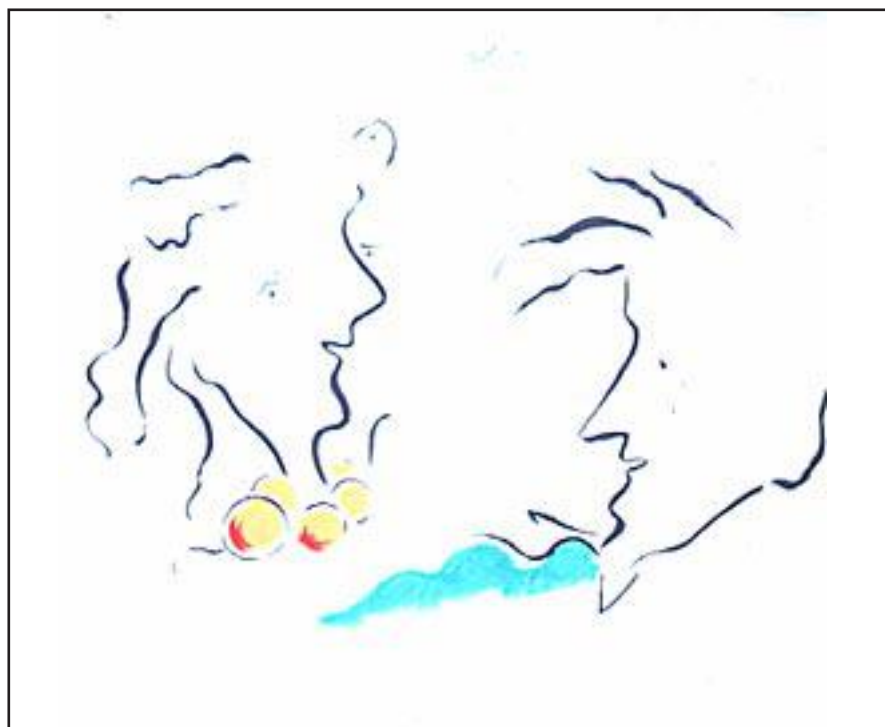
Purdum Productions, Passion Pictures, and Hibbert Ralph in the 80s. Since 1996, she has been working at Walt Disney Feature Animation in L.A., where she just completed work on their next feature film, *Hercules*.

In New York, Tissa David leads the way as the "Grand Dame" of Animation (she deserves an entire article!) She is currently working at Ink Tank, along with Suzan Pitt, an accomplished independent filmmaker who recently signed on to The Ink Tank's new division, Ink Tank Too.

Los Angeles-based Kurtz and Friends has long depended on the versatile talents of Peggy Yamamoto and Pam Cook. Pam also has a long-time relationship with Celluloid, a Denver-based animation house.

I know I have failed to mention many women who may be currently animating and directing in the studios that I didn't get to research. Hopefully, this article can serve as a catalyst to bring others out of the woodwork. The non-profit organization, Women in Animation, is planning to celebrate these and other women in commercials at a presentation and meeting next October. This is an open invitation to you readers working in the industry to let me know about other women working in the field. Through recognition of our accomplishments, we can foster the growth of a new generation of women in the animation industry.

Bonita Versh is a director for Klasky Csupo Commercials, and an active supporter of Women in Animation, a non-profit organization. She can be reached by phone at Klasky Csupo in Hollywood: (213) 957-4198.



Animator Maureen Selwood recently directed this spot for El Torito restaurants at Duck Soup Productions.

An Interview With Aardman's Peter Lord

by Wendy Jackson

As an animator, director and co-founder of Aardman Animations, Peter Lord has established himself as one of today's premier talents in stop-motion, or, as the Brits call it, "model" animation. Together with David Sproxton, he established Aardman Animations in 1972, after experimenting with animation in their school years.

Early endeavors produced a *The Amazing Adventure of Morph*, a clay animation series for children that aired on BBC in the early 1980s. *Conversation Pieces*, a series of short films commissioned by Britain's Channel Four led to the development of Aardman's unique style, appealing to adults more than children. This eventually led to many commercial jobs for the studio, and the landmark *Sledgehammer* video for Peter Gabriel, in collaboration with Stephen Johnson and The Brothers Quay. As the studio grew, additional talents were added, such as Richard Goleszowski, Jeff Newitt, Steve Box and Nick Park, whose 1994 *Creature Comforts* and Wallace and Gromit films, *A Grand Day Out*, *The Wrong Trousers* and *A Close Shave* have taken home three Oscars and countless festival awards.

Over the years, and in between commercials, Lord directed several short films, including the Oscar-nominated *Adam* in 1992. Lord's lat-

est short film, *Wat's Pig*, is Aardman's sixth Oscar nomination, and Lord's second Oscar nomination as a director. We caught up with Peter for an interview during his recent visit to Los Angeles for the Academy Awards. I was struck by his friendly, cordial manner and articulation, qualities not so common in animators, a breed of human which spends countless hours alone creating just seconds of film frame by frame.



Peter Lord.

Animation World Magazine: Has the financial success of Aardman's short films, commercial work, and all of the related merchandising given you more creative freedom?

Peter Lord: For the financial, yes, we have got that. It

enabled us to make *Wat's Pig*, and Steve Box is directing an 11 minute short called *Stage Fright*, which is terrific as well, I must say. Aardman funded those by 40%. That's partly about us retaining all the rights to them, character rights and so on. I don't expect, *Wat's Pig* to make its money back, or *Stage Fright* to make its money back, but we have that luxury. We can do that here, because we get money from the commercials and the merchandising malarkey.

AWM: What has Aardman's involvement been in the licensing and merchandising of the Wallace & Gromit films? Have you been very closely involved with the concepts and designs?

PL: Yes, we have. When it started, we were very shy about it. Didn't want the characters to be exploited. We didn't want the people buying the stuff to be exploited, either. Our circle of model-makers did most of the original models for the merchandise, just because it's so difficult to do well. The same goes for the illustrations. I know that the likes of Disney have these fantastic bibles how to do everything, but we don't quite do that.

AWM: You used a very interesting split-screen technique in *Wat's Pig*. How did you go about

doing that?

PL: As a concept, it was in there right from the start. I think it is interesting as a way with story telling, not just as a technical exercise. I think about Paul Driessen's film, *The End of the World in Four Seasons*, a similar storytelling approach. There was a time when I thought of doing more of the film in split-screen, not the whole film, but more with split-screen, but that [idea] slowly eroded as I worked on the storyboards. I felt it would become too "tricksy." It was, in a way, an intellectual challenge, but technically, we went about it in the most quaint, old-fashioned way imaginable, with film opticals at the end. Exactly why we didn't composite it electronically, I'm not quite sure. I wish we had, it would have been a lot easier!. It's funny, the way we work, it's like we were in a time warp, really. It's like making a film 20 years ago or something. We didn't assemble two halves of the image until the end, so I didn't really know how things would work out accurately until the end.

AWM: If you didn't composite until post-production, how did you sync up the movements so precisely—like the scene in which the two brothers stretch in the same position?

PL: There were two of us working on the film at that stage, so, in that case, my partner Sam shot his half first, then I could analyze it and clock it accurately. But, you couldn't see it, you could only guess how the two were going to interact. It's kind of like the animation equivalent of these films where people work with non-existent images, where they're acting to something that isn't there yet.

AWM: Did you matte-off the

camera while you were filming?

PL: No, we filmed full-frame and matted-off the screen only when we were viewing the footage. So, where you're animating is wonderfully perfect, you know, and the other side of the frame is kind of chaotic, with all of the junk, tools, messes and things animating around on the table! [laughing] We should make the "animators at work" version of the film, using those out-takes!

AWM: Everybody is talking about computers replacing stop-motion. How do you use computers, and do you foresee computers ever replacing what you do?

PL: Our finished material is still shot on film, we think it still gives the best image, and what's really on film remains a mystery until it comes back from the labs the next morning. We use computers for frame-grabbing videos, or, we still call it video, even though it is digital now. Actually, we simultaneously shoot on these computer disks, so we're watching the animation as we go along. We are fairly committed to

working that way now with computers, because it's safer. We've been doing it about ten years. I think of all technical innovations, it's the most useful because it transforms the 3-D scene to the 2-D tele-

"I think of animation as a performance, a live event."

vision screen, so it's much easier to keep track of how your puppet's moving.

This [kind of system] is the norm now, the standard, but I haven't always worked that way and I have some misgivings about it. The people we train now, they think to work any other way is just absurd or ridiculous. But I still think there is a virtue in animating what we call "blind." The thing about working with the computer, working reactively, as it were, is that you see what you've done and then you react to it and even correct it. That's what wrong to me. If you work without a computer, you work directly, instinctively. I think of animation as a performance, a live event. It's slow and painful, but even so, it's a live performance just



Aardman's Wallace and Gromit characters have achieved cult status in England.

the same

And also answering the question about computers, there is of course CGI. We have a small CGI department now. Just two people at the moment, just doing research and development, poking around, you know. They aren't researching the technique or programming so much, because with all of the [software developers] out there, we don't need to think about that. The task of our team is to come up with some really attractive performance-based stuff working on the computer. So it actually interests me a great deal.

What doesn't interest me about animation is the hard work. I mean, I know this art is hard work, generally speaking. But I don't see why you should suffer unnecessarily - I often think that stop-frame animation is a way to suffer unnecessarily, so anything that you can do to ease that pain gets my vote. Really, you know, I'm not into this macho kind of thing when animators say, "Hah! I did a sixteen-hour shot today and it was sweltering hot, the puppet was hanging on tungsten wire the whole time," just to make the impression of how much they suffered. Who cares? All that really matters is the performance on the screen. So in that sense, looking at CGI as a labor-saver, then it gets my vote entirely. I was going to say, if you could do the same performance on CGI as with stop motion....but then why try for that? Isn't that a strange thing to do? If you try to exactly copy clay animation in CG form, that actually seems to be a very sterile exercise because you're just copying. More interesting, surely, is to devise a new language for CG animation.

AWM: What if you could scan your puppet characters into the



Peter Lord with puppets from *Wat's Pig*

computer, and have them look exactly the same as they do... If you could animate them in the computer, do you think you would do that?

PL: Well, there is something about working with the materials. There is a fundamental difference between working with your hands and your arms and your fingertips, and working on the keyboard. I don't know. . . . For all of us animators at Aardman now, we are trained in this craft, just the like a musician or a painter, it's all hand and head, hand and brain. One of the guys said to me just the other day: "When I animate," he said, "I can do it by sound," I think he was dreaming actually, but he said that when he animates a puppet, it's the sound of the joint moving that he's aware of. This type of experience indicates how instinctive and tactile our art is. You grab the puppet with two hands, and you feel the whole thing move, you feel the twist of the chest away from the hips, the roll of the shoulders. . . . The camera has to move right, the light has

to be right, the actor has to do the right thing — make-up, costume, everything has to be right. Just for one moment in time. That's the way we work. I believe that the humanity in what we're doing, the process, all comes through in the final film.

Whereas with CG, of course, this is not the case at all. You can just get each piece right separately and in isolation. One guy works on the performance, about a month later someone sorts out the lighting, then the camerawork.

AWM: I've spoken to a number of stop-motion animators have recently made the switch to computer animation, and I'm sensing a lot of their frustration. They're saying, "I can't touch it," it's not what they're used to.

PL: Well, now we've still got sort of a hangover from the old days, lots of people re-training their hands and their brains and bringing old ideas to a new medium. What I'm expecting is to have kids coming out of college who have just done this [computer animation] forever,



A Close Shave.

and for whom it's the only way of animating, for them it's natural. When those people start coming through with new ideas, then I think we'll see something, and I assume it will get very exciting. If I saw such a person, I would employ them at Aardman because

I'm told you must never say "family audience." It's a dirty word, the 'F' word, you know.

I'm not interested in us being that behind, like practicing an ancient medieval craft!

David Sproxton and I are the two founders of the company, and, at 43, we're virtually the oldest members in the studio. But even though everyone else is younger than us, we're still much more inclined to experiment than they are. There's an incredible tradition in a lot of people. I'd like to experiment with CGI, but we haven't much. I guess the first thing you do, is to do as they did in *James And The Giant Peach*, those things that

you can't do, like water and environs, smoke and stuff. . . . you might do that as a first delicate step towards CGI.

AWM: You have a lot of effects in a lot of Aardman films, and I often wonder how they were created. Do you use computers in post production to take out wires, or to add effects, or are you "too pure?"

PL: No, we're pure, but not too pure. For the nice commercial work, we go to post production and take out all the rigs and tidy up, and occasionally we do have completely CGI parts as well. But, for the films, we are very pure. *A Close Shave* was done in the very old fashioned tradition. There were a few shots where we used post production to take out rigs, but otherwise, everyone went to enormous lengths to do it for real.

AWM: I sense that. When I see a drop of water or a bead of sweat in a Nick Park film, I just know

that it's hand-blown glass from Milan or something.

PL: Yeah, you're right. I'm still amazed at the ingenuity of people. And it comes from this desire to get the performance right, in front of camera, all at once, and by instinct. But I have a feeling that we'll use much more electronic post production with the feature film that we're working on now.

Editor's Note: Since the taping of this interview, Aardman has announced that the feature film they are

working on is called *Chicken Run*. the film will be a stop-motion animated comedy feature about two chickens, Rocky and Ginger, and their attempt at a "prisoner of war" type escape from a farm in the 1950s. The screenplay was written by Jack Rosenthal, and based on a story which has been in development by Peter Lord and Nick Park since 1995. The film will be co-directed by Lord and Park, and executive produced by partner and financier Jake Eberts (*James and the Giant Peach*.) of Allied Filmmakers. *Chicken Run* will be produced by Aardman in their Bristol, England-based studio, with pre-production set to begin in September 1997. Aardman is currently in the process of talking to several U.S. studios about distribution for the film, which we can expect to be released towards the end of 1998.

AWM: What can you tell us about the feature?

PL: Not much! It's a shame real-

ly, but that's how it is when you're in development. Nick [Park] and I wrote the story at great length and the screenplay is now being written by a guy named Jack Rosenthal. He's bringing our story to life with brilliant dialog. We're designing and building some of the characters now, and when the story's written, we can push ahead with that kind of stuff. It's just full of technical challenges, which kind of interests me. We are planning an 18 month shoot, which should start next March.

AWM: What kind of audience are you designing this film for?

PL: I'm told you must never say "family audience." It's a dirty word, the 'F' word, you know. Regardless, that's the kind of film it will be, appealing to a wide range of people. Like on TV, where they make these charts of the viewing profile flat between the age of 20 and the age of 80, Wallace and Gromit do it. Everybody watches it and enjoys it. That's the goal. It's not easy. I suppose inexorably it will tend to

be marketed as if for children.

AWM: Why did you choose to go at it independently with so many offers from all the studios?

PL: Well, our big kick is independence. That's what we're after. Not that I think the studios want to crush us at all, but it's just that we've got different agendas. For example, the film will be extremely English in sensibility. Now if that's arrogant, that's no different than the normal American arrogance, assuming the rest of the world wants to watch

**My advice to young animators?
Tell a good story, for heaven's sake.**

their culture. But I think that even the most general American audience will actually enjoy it because it will be a great story.

AWM: Are all of your resources going to go into the feature?

PL: No. A lot of artists, as you can imagine. But, there are some



Twin brothers in Wat's Pig.

people whose best interests do not lie in the feature. Six years ago, Aardman was a company of about 15 people doing a mixture of short films and commercials together. And now we've grown to be whatever we are now, about 50 people. The way I see it, in a year's time we'll have an enormous crew on the feature, and a small

group of 15 or so dedicated to doing a mixture of short films and commercials. That seems to be the way it's going to go. What that means in the long term intrigues me. This small group of people, in turn, may just grow out to be a different company.

AWM: How many people do you evidently expect to have working on the feature?

PL: I think about 120 or something like that. I can tell you that seeing what Henry Selick did has been terribly helpful and educational for us. Your animators are your performers, and you have to keep them performing as best as possible. So the plan is to have twice the number of units as we have animators so that we'll always be leapfrogging ourselves. . . . while one team is working on Scene 1, the crew is setting up for Scene 2. So they're not waiting around, that kills animators. I know that you get snarled, where the hapless animator waits around all day while people, agonize over what they did yesterday, check the rushes, think about it, get off the set and tinker around. . . . then the animator's not shooting until four in the afternoon. This frequently happens, and if we can avoid that, we hope to be madly, madly efficient.

AWM: Speaking of Selick, do you expect to be staffing up from the recent close of his Twitching Images studio?

PL: No, not really. We have this training program, which works really, really, well. It's fascinating. A year ago we said, "Yikes! We don't have enough animators!" And we work with and know a lot of the animators in Britain, and all their strengths and weaknesses. But we still need more. We observed that the peo-



Wat's Pig.

ed more. We observed that the people coming out of college haven't animated enough, because colleges don't teach the craft skills to anyone at all. There's lots of talk of theory, and they may be happy to be making their own films, but they never hand them anything to animate. Now that's okay, I like brilliant young directors, but, I also want brilliant young animators. But when you look at the kids, you find, to your horror, that in their whole career, they've only animated about ten minutes of film! So, we started this training scheme with the local University of the West of England, right in Bristol. The simple premise was that everyone will be animating every day. We got these handy computer systems, and set up little cubicles. We give each of them a simple puppet, and for four months they animated every day. They would also do some life drawing and some life modeling, because I still think that observation of the human figure is really important. Our teacher is a guy called Lloyd Price. We took on five students to start, and there are five more now.

but it won't be quite as intensive. This was just so intensive from our point of view. It's been handed over to the university, now, but we will still participate. It won't be the same, however, it won't be quite as focused. We can't afford all that training time. We hope we've trained the university as much as we trained the students.

AWM: Besides Lloyd Price, are you or any of the others on the Aardman staff doing any teaching?

PL: Yes, both me and Nick. We've done "Master Classes," as they say. When the students came back to the studio, they did a commercial project that wasn't very hands-on but I was overseeing it, looking in on them as often as I could to jolly them along. And the students had input from me, Nick Park and Steve Box, who was the other key animator on *A Close Shave* and a couple of others. We had lucky, lucky, lucky, lucky kids really who had the best training, certainly in Britain.

I think that four of those ten will be key animators.

AWM: Are they all British?

PL: They'll all British.

AWM: So are you open to people from elsewhere in the world to apply?

PL: Yes, we are. It's going to run next year as well,

AWM: There are so many people who want so desperately to get involved in stop-motion, while there are fewer and fewer opportunities out there. What advice would you have for young, aspiring stop-motion animators?

PL: It's an interesting question, because I do feel, and fear, that in the States, stop-motion is dying out to CGI. For a young person, which is more important—storytelling or craft? I do believe that if someone comes along who directs well, and can tell a good story, then I personally will forgive them any inadequate animation, as a viewer, and as a potential employer of directors. So, if a young person in college wants to make a name for themselves, I would say get a great idea, a great story, and tell that. I'm not saying forget about technique, but I'd rather see flair and energy and humor (well, it doesn't have to have humor, even.) There are so few really good films, that a good story with a good punch line just communicates so well, and makes the audience wild. So, my advice to young animators? Tell a good story, for heaven's sake.

Wendy Jackson is Associate Editor of Animation World Magazine.

Cartoons On The Bay

by Giannalberto Bendazzi

The second edition of Cartoons on the Bay, the only festival in the world devoted entirely to television animation, took place last month (April 5-9) on the picturesque southern Italian coast of Amalfi, near Naples. Only in its second year, this festival has become an important event for the animation world. It is at once a cultural event for animators, filmmakers, executives, animation critics and

animation master Jimmy Teru Murakami (*When the Wind Blows*) visiting from Ireland. Italians Bruno Bozzetto, Guido Manuli, Giuseppe Laganá, Pierluigi De Mas, Marco Pagot and Enzo D'Alò were all present, wise-cracking and discussing their new projects. Bruno Bozzetto confessed that he is thinking of

tive, although somewhat freezing setting of the ancient Arsenali (shipyards) hall, while the programs of animation previews and live-action TV productions for children took place in the nearby village of Maiori. Meanwhile, a program on music and cartoons was being presented in Salerno, the biggest town of the area. My feeling is that the festival would have been better if it had been more localized. But it is



historians, a privileged circle for discussing the everlasting moral, psychological and educational issues surrounding television and children; and, perhaps most importantly, an occasion for showing the little known treasures of the history of animation to a hungry public.

The professional attendance was mainly from Italy, with a mix of European and American executives participating in the seminars. It was also a treat to have the presence of

The Amalfi coast, site of Cartoons on the Bay.

developing a new feature film, his first since *Allegro non Troppo* in 1978.

As is the case with many animation festivals, there are usually more events going on than any one person can keep up with. The 58 films in competition and 56 in showcase were screened in the evoca-

nevertheless true that this inherent flaw is also the charm of the festival.

An important aspect of Cartoons on the Bay is its many conferences and seminars, which were mainly devoted to "children and television," the theme of this festival. Also of interest were the seminars "Scaling the Height of Animation," which discussed the limits of animation market, and "Writing for Animation", a professional seminar for animation scriptwriters.



The Amalfi coast, site of Cartoons on the Bay.

And The Pulcinella Goes To . . .

The international jury was comprised of Marc du Pontavice of Gaumont Multimedia in France, Robby London of DIC Entertainment in USA, Theresa Plummer-Andrews of BBC Childrens Programmes in U.K., Michael Schaak of Trickompany Filmproduktion in Germany, and Alessandra Valeri Manera of Mediaset Networks in Italy.

After many years of honorable but fragile craft, Italian animation is blossoming into an industry.

Of the 58 films in competition, the top prizes were awarded to *Rotten Ralph* by John Matthews of USA for the Best Childrens Series category, and to *Link* by Tapani Knuutila of Canada for the Best Adult Series category. These were two well-deserved prizes, according to the general opinion of the festivalgoers, who generally agreed about the rest of the prizes as well.

The Sun is a Yellow Giraffe by Finland's Elmer Diktonus of the Epidem studio brought home both the UNICEF Award and the Silver Pulcinella for Best European Series, while Moscow-based Christmas Films' *Testament: The Bible in Animation*, directed by Aida Ziablikova, was awarded both the Silver Pulcinella for Best TV Movie and a special mention for Best Direction. The four other films awarded Silver Pulcinellas were Cosgrove Hall's (U.K.) *Brambly Hedge* for Technical Innovation, Hanna Barbera's (USA) *Dexter's Laboratory* for Best Script, Grand Slamm's (U.K.) *Percy the Park Keeper* for Best Series for Infants and Walt Disney's (USA) *The Lion King's Timon & Pumba* for All Audiences.

My favorites which were not awarded prizes include Hanna Barbera's *Cow and Chicken*, by David Feiss and Robert Alvarez, Nickelodeon's *Rocko's Modern Life* by Robert McNally-Scull, Warner Bros.' *Superman* by Toshihiko Masuda, which is very faithful to the original comic strip and very well modernized.

Features

Everyone was eager to see the preview Disney's latest feature film, *Hercules*, produced by Alice Dewey, and directed by John Musker and Ron Clements (*The Little Mermaid*, *The Lion King*.) Roy Conly from Disney's Paris studio introduced the show, explaining who was who and what was going on between the fragments screened. Ultimately, the preview left most of us guessing what the actual film will look like when it premieres in June! One thing is certain about *Hercules*, though. . . . the film's Greek heroine, Megara (her friends call her "Meg") is saucier and more down to earth than any preceding Disney princess.

Other feature film screenings included Japanese Osamu Dezaki's *Black Jack*, a film adapted from the comic strip character created by the late Osamu Tezuka, and German Trickompany's *Werner, Eat My Dust*, the film that's making history for out-grossing Disney's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* in the German domestic market.

Enzo D'Alò, who sold his *La Freccia Azzurra* animated feature film to Miramax for distribution in the U.S. and U.K., is preparing two new animated features. Coming for Christmas 1998 is *Storia di una gabbianella e del gatto che le insegnò a volare*, or, *Story of a Little Seagull and of the Cat Who Taught Her How to Fly* a film adapted from the novel by Luis Sepulveda. And for Christmas 1999, d' Alo is working on a new animated *Pinocchio*.



Timon & Pumbaa. © Disney.

Keywords: Quantity and Quality

Of all of the events during the week, there are two positive observations I am taking from these Amalfi days. As far as quantity is concerned, animation today looks like "the promised land" for employment. Animated fare today accounts for 25% of global audiovisual output, and during the last four years, worldwide animation production has increased 600%. In 1996,

Europe produced 750 hours of animation, twelve times the output of 60 hours in 1986. Secondly, the increased *quantity* is also of increased *quality* than before. Or, at least it is much more creative, brilliant and stimulating than one might expect from a globalized market which could have aimed at the lowest common denominator in order to please everyone's tastes. Kate Fawkes, executive producer of Britain's HIT Entertainment, summed it up well when she said to *The Hollywood Reporter*, "Broadcasters now have so many years worth of junk to recycle, that they are much more interested in quality."

The Italian Animation Industry

After many years of honorable but fragile craft, Italian animation is blossoming into an industry. The public broadcaster RAI, which, through its acquisitions branch, SACIS, is the actual backer/organizer of *Cartoons on the Bay*, has set a schedule for financing pilots and series. Some of them already in production are *Albert the Wolf* developed from the comic strip *Silver*, and directed by Giuseppe Laganà.

. . . *La Pimpa*, developed from the comic strip *Altan*, and directed by Enzo D'Alò. . . and *Sandokan*, developed from the novels by Salgari, and directed by Marco Pagot.

Many other Italian animators and cartoonists are at work. Franco Bianco, a young director, Guido Favaro and Francesco Artibani, scriptwriters, and Luigi Zollo, producer, are creating a pilot, *Giak and*

In one or two years, the annual Italian output of animation should match Britain's or Germany's, at about 200 hours.

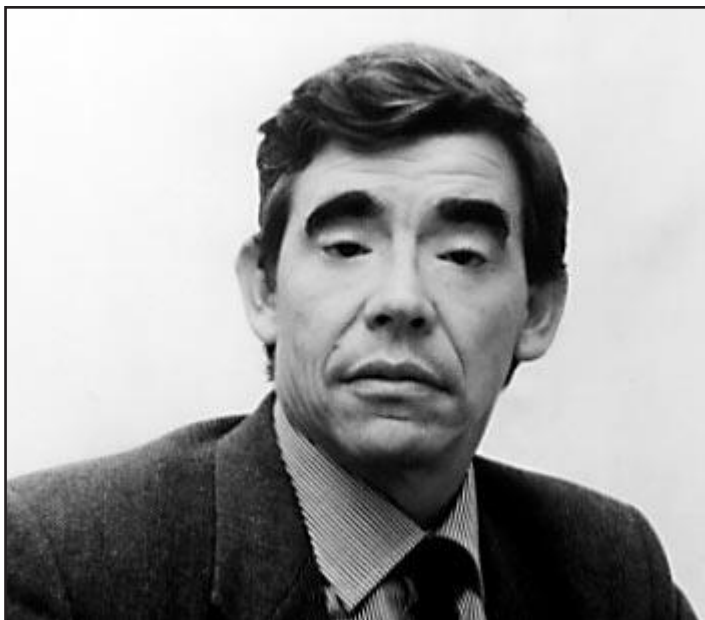
Zac, the story of two crazy and inconsequent detectives. It is funny, fresh and features a perfect timing. The now privately-owned broadcaster Mediaset has announced projects for financing animation series, good news because it will avoid any monopoly, very dangerous for the many old and new firms that are developing and investing into hardware and teaching. Among them I must mention Laterna Magica, the producer of *La Freccia Azzurra*, which has invested over

\$590,000.00 in training new animation professionals. Back to RAI, whose 1997 investment into independent cinema is roughly 50 billion lire (a little less than 3 billion dollars.) Of these monies, 14 billion (approximately \$823,600.00) will be devoted to animation. RAI executives estimate that in one or two years, the annual Italian output of animation

should match Britain's or Germany's, at about 200 hours.

Discussions of turning *Cartoons on the Bay* into an official market such as MIP or MIFA have been put away for now, with an agreement between SACIS and MIFED, the famous Italian film market. SACIS will instead organize an animation "pavilion"-type exhibition package and screening program at the 64th MIFED film market in Milan October 19-24.

Giannalberto Bendazzi, a frequent contributor to Animation World Magazine, is a Milan-based film historian and critic whose own history of animation, Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation, was published in the US by Indiana University Press and in the UK by John Libbey. His other books on animation include Topoline e poi (1978), Due volte l'oceano (1983) and Il movimento creato (1993, with Guido Michelone).



Alfio Bastiancich, artistic director for *Cartoons on the Bay*.

WAC-a-WAC-a-WAC-a



The 1997 World



Animation Celebration

by Wendy Jackson & Harvey Deneroff

Attending the World Animation Celebration in March was something like running a six-day marathon, as one sprinted between festival screenings, a business conference, a technology exhibit (and accompanying classes) and a job expo (with panel discussions), taking time out to participate in the making of a feature film, while refreshing oneself with a slew of late night parties. Thus, when the planned Sunday morning screening of the best of the festival was canceled at the last minute, it seemed a huge sigh of relief was heard all around Pasadena. The marathon aspects were punctuated by a number of

top-notch events and plentiful opportunities to schmooze and network, but were also besmirched by an often confusing scheduling and other teething pains.

The Celebration itself was wrapped around a revival of the Los Angeles International Animation Celebration (1985-91), a festival run by Terry Thoren on behalf of Expanded Entertainment, distributor of the International Tournée of Animation. Thoren eventually bought Expanded and *Animation Magazine* (which organized this year's event); and now, in addition to these enterprises, Thoren functions primarily as CEO of Klasky Csupo (*Rugrats*, *Duckman*, etc.).

The old Celebrations were mostly held in the Nuart Theater, a comfortably run down revival house in West Los Angeles, which lacked the luxurious ambiance of such festivals as Cardiff and Ottawa. This time around, though, the Celebration was ensconced in the elegant and spacious Pasadena Civic Center, which houses a 3,000 seat concert hall, along with two exhibition spaces; *Animation Magazine's* International Business Conference for Television Animation was held in the nearby Doubletree Hotel, and the Academy Theater was drafted for additional screenings (including a mini-anime festival).



Crowds lined up in front of the Pasadena Civic, where most of the festival took place. Photo courtesy of Guillaume Calop.



L-R: Richard Condie, Corky Quackenbush, Terry Thoren and Ron Diamond.
Photo courtesy of Guillaume Calop.

World's Largest What?

Touted as the "world's largest animation event," it may seem ironic that the sheer magnitude of the event was cause of its weaknesses. It was obvious that many of the problems were associated with trying to do too much, especially given the fact that each of components were handled by separate organizations. There was the schedule of screenings, World Animation Celebration, then there was the ASIFA-Hollywood Animation Opportunities Expo, Miller Freeman's New Animation Technology Expo (NATE, sounding suspiciously like NATPE,) The International Business Conference of Television Animation (IBCTVA,) the Women in Animation Seminars, The Animation 2000, and many other small events scattered throughout. People complained of having five different schedules, and it was sometimes only after the fact that you realized what you had missed. The only sensible way to stay on top of it all, perhaps, would



Margaret Loesch moderates a panel discussion at the IBCTVA.
Photo © 1997 Elaina Verret.

have been to have a full-time personal planner, or to clone yourself.

To compare WAC to established international fests like Annecy, Ottawa or Hiroshima seems unfair. WAC is not a festival, it is a "celebration," and in that identity it is most confident as a large networking, professional and educational event. Focusing on those strengths, there were several aspects of the Celebration that went off seamlessly.

Highlights

The International Business Conference of Television Animation (IBCTVA) at the beginning of the week went along smoothly and was full of informative panel discussions sprinkled with top-notch international executives, mixed in with presentations by a variety of international studios, as well as an effective keynote address by Nelvana's Michael Hirsch.

The ASIFA-Hollywood Job Opportunities Expo, now in its fourth year, benefited greatly from being part of a larger attraction. Taking place on the closing two days, and in a central location, the Opportunities Expo rapidly became the place to meet people. It was both the most expansive and relaxed version of the event, with elaborate booths instead of tables. But the number of exhibiting companies and attendees was down from the previous year, due to a quadrupling of the exhibition and increase of admission prices. Perhaps it was also due to the decline approaching the once-ravenous recruiting efforts of the major studios. Eager portfolio-wielding students and aspiring animators were met with friendly but un-promising meetings with the likes of Disney, Warner Bros., and Dreamworks, who are nearly staffed-up for their

feature film productions. Running alongside the exhibitions were a grouping of 45 career-oriented panel discussions, on everything from principals of color keying to career opportunities for post-production personnel. It would perhaps be untoward of us to comment too much on the panels, as we moderated one of each, but they did seem highly productive and quite well attended.



The ASIFA-Hollywood Job Opportunities Expo. Photo © 1997 Elaina Verret.

Among the outstanding film programming events was a presentation by Fox, which included a lengthy panel discussion with key players in various Fox Animation projects. Moderated by Fox Family Films president Chris Meledandri, the panel featured in-person Matt Groening, creator and executive producer of *The Simpsons*, David Silverman, co-director of *The Simpsons*, Kevin Bannerman, vp of Fox Family Films, Greg Daniels, co-creator and executive producer of *King of the Hill*, Maureen Donley, executive producer of Fox Feature Animation's debut effort *Anastasia*, Ben Edlund, creator of *The Tick* (now being developed into a feature film for Fox,) Margaret Loesch, chairman and CEO of Fox Kids Network and Mike Judge, creator of *Beavis & Butthead* and *King of the Hill*. Bringing all of those creative people together in one place was a notable accomplishment in its own right, and the result was an



The Fox panel discussion.
Photo © 1997 Elaina Verret.

interesting and informative discussion which left the audience feeling positively charged, and of course, scrambling for autographs and introductions afterwards.

Another excellent program was *A Tribute to Aardman Animation*, perfectly timed with the studio's 20th anniversary and Peter Lord's Oscar nomination for *Wat's Pig*. Famed director Nick Park and Aardman co-founders Peter Lord and David Sproxton were in person, and they spoke on-stage in an interview format with moderator Leonard Maltin following a screening of selected Aardman films and commercials.

Viacom president and CEO Sumner Redstone appeared for a highly anticipated and well attended keynote address on the closing night of the festival. While it was a slightly inspiring endorsement of creator-driven animation, unfortunately, Redstone's speech read like an expertly-crafted press release, marred by gloating over the very

real accomplishments of MTV and Nickelodeon. His presence, nonetheless, added an air of officiality and importance to the proceedings.

The Competition

With 40 awards categories, the competition aspect of the festival was the least impressive, being simultaneously enormous and uneventful. Almost all of the independent films had already been seen at other festivals during the past two years, and the proliferation of TV shows, commercials and home video productions really clogged up the program. People were not talking about the films during social times as they usually do at festivals, maybe because they'd already seen them at other festivals during the year, and few people were attending the daytime competition screenings in the uncomfortable, makeshift upstairs theater. The presence of 40 separate awards categories severely diluted the impact of any one award, especially during the final awards show, which turned out to be very anticlimactic and confusing, more like a graduation ceremony than a proper awards show. Ending the show with Terry Thoren's self-congratulatory roll-calling of all festival staff and volunteers on-stage took the focus away from the filmmakers, a shift from the usual "behind-the-scenes"



L-R: Herb Scannell, president of Nickelodeon, Sumner Redstone, Chairman and CEO of Viacom and Albie Hecht, senior vice president of worldwide production and development for Nickelodeon.

Photo © 1997 Elaina Verret.

invisible persona of festival organizers.

Overall, the after-festival buzz about Hollywood is positive; exchanges of impressions among colleagues ring with phrases like "I had more fun than I expected to," and "It was great for networking." Well, fun and networking are two good things. The pressure and expectation on WAC were particularly high, as this was something that has been hyped-up relentlessly in the industry for years without any results. Everyone was exhausted at the end of the week, a good sign that an event was appreciated, or it could just mean that the closing night Klasky Csupo day-glo party got a little WAC-ky. . . . Organizers say that the festival will happen again in 1998, so it looks like those of us who went this year will get to enjoy another week in sunny Pasadena, and those skeptics who waited this year out will have to come out from hiding in their studios and join us.

See also the list of WAC Award winners on the World Animation Celebration official web site, and Harvey Deneroff's pre-festival interview with director Leslie Sullivan.



The staff and volunteers of WAC 97. Photo © 1997 Elaina Verret.

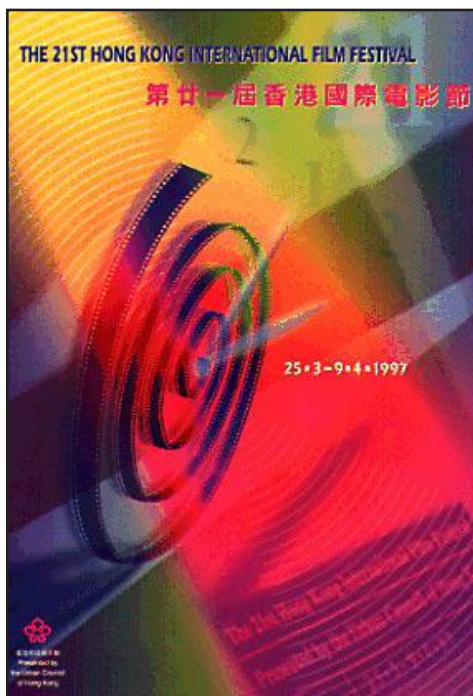
The 21st Hong Kong Film Festival

by Gigi Hu

Hong Kong is living to the fullest and probably will continue to, right to the very moment of the midnight chimes of June 30, 1997, celebrating the imminent handover in July, by which Hong Kong will become a Special Administrative Region of China. The 21st Hong Kong Film Festival which took place March 25 - April 9 is one gallant testimony, and the festival organizers have obviously decided on a "big bang" approach. The science-fiction like city-state of Hong Kong continues to thrive, and it is no wonder that it forms the background landscape of Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*.

Spread over seven venues, The Hong Kong Film Festival is a marathon cultural event that has grown steadily through the years, attracting international and local cinephiles. Said one local spectator, "it can be annoying as it tends to fall over the Easter holidays, but I can never get away as the programme is getting more interesting and varied every year."

This year's festival screened 288 films from 42 countries. In addition, an interesting conference paying tribute to 50 Years of Hong Kong Cinema was held April 10-12, featuring contributions from local and overseas film directors, critics and scholars. Other fringe activities included outdoor screenings and an exhibition on Hong Kong Production and Distribution Industries 1947-97.



Hong Kong's Animation Appetite

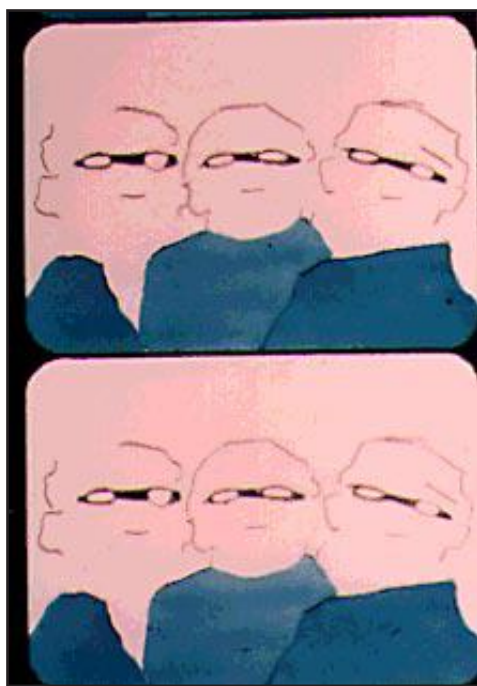
Hong Kongers are no strangers to animation. The organizers would not dare to leave out this category altogether. Indeed, animation spectatorship is strong among the local people. A Japanese animation film is known to run continuously for six months, appearing daily in ten shows, screened in both Japanese and Cantonese. In other words, the film festival has to compete with commercial cinemas and local distributors for screening rights. Cynics may frown at the idea of watching "small things move on the screen" but the visual appetite of Hong Kongers is amazing. They arrived in troupes and individually: tertiary students, couples and working pro-

fessionals all queueing up in an orderly fashion to lap up their favourite film genre.

The festival began to feature animation films in 1979. On the 11th HKIFF, it screened a record of four animation features: *Vampires in Havana*, *When the Wind Blows*, *Nausicaa in the Valley of the Wind* and *Laputa*. Last year, it was a "whooping harvest" according to some animation fans, as three Japanese feature-length animation films were shown together with another 12 world animation delights.

This year, the organizers could not find any strong animation films not already in the hands of the local distributors. One probable example is Hayao Miyazaki's new theatrical release, *Whisper of the Heart*, which is currently being shown in a local cinema. But Hong Kongers are not discouraged. They turned up in full force for the festival's animation screenings. The two animation sessions followed by another two repeated sessions were all held at the posh Hong Kong Cultural Centre Grand Theatre, which, at over 900 seats, is the largest venue of the festival. Over the weekend, free outdoor screenings of animation were held at the piazza of Hong Kong Cultural Centre facing the glimmering Victoria Harbour. Sensitive to the public, certain Category III animation was not screened in this program.

Many, as you can tell, are not



Andrew Higgins' *The Gourmand*.

first-timers to animation and would not hesitate to comment or express their viewing experiences. For example, the Cantonese expression, "qi xin," (meaning madness/ridiculous), can be heard if viewers dislike or do not understand the animation shorts. "How could the programmer have selected this?" the audience could be heard whispering. On the other hand, they did not hesitate to clap or show a rupture of joy to express appreciation of some films. Among the 17 animation films shown, Hubert Sielecki's *Air Fright*, Janet Perlman's *Dinner For Two*, Andrew Higgins' *The Gourmand*, Lasse Persson's *Hand in Hand*, Chris Backhouse's *Lovely Day* and Michaela Pavlatova's *Repete* had the audience chuckling loudly and hungry for more. This year's Oscar winning film, *Quest*, was also shown to an eager audience which grinned, gasped and sighed at the sandman's fateful end, while Bill Plympton's *How To Make Love To A Woman* was very popular too.

The Brief Life of Fire, Act 2 Scene 2: Suring and the Kuk-ok was the only Asian/Southeast Asian entry. Directed by Aureus Solito from

Philippines, the story is based on a Palawan myth. For once, city-slick Hong Kongers are transported into a tropical jungle of spells and plant-like creatures.

Local Animation

Local animation appeared in the Independent Film and Video Category. They were award winners from the recent 1996 Hong Kong Independent Short Film and Video Awards: Chang Tze-hin's (#01), Ellen Yuen's *iD* and Yuen Kin-to's *Foul Ball*. Perhaps I am too new to Hong Kong's cultural psyche, but I found it hard to find the actual themes or content expressed in these films. But in terms of technicality, there were some lasting impressions. "They are not perfect," one local film critic puts it aptly, "but are a delight to the heart, each possessing a different

It is a covert knowledge that the Hong Kong Film Festival has been instrumental in introducing non-Disney animation films to Hong Kongers.

quality."

It is a covert knowledge that the Hong Kong Film Festival has been instrumental in introducing non-Disney animation films to Hong Kongers. Animation director Hayao Miyazaki now has a huge following in Hong Kong, since his films were first shown at the festival in 1987.



Chang Tze-hin's (#01).



The Brief Life of Fire

Ironically, his films have recently been acquired by Disney for video distribution.

Supported by the Urban Council, the film festival is efficiently run and lives up to its international reputation as a premier Asian film event. Pioneer managers and programmers are still holding on to their torches with unflagging enthusiasm. One can only congratulate their efforts in bringing in a wide repertoire of international and local films, old and new, archival or censored, 35mm or Betamax, and of course not forgetting the animation category.

Gigi Hu is now a Ph.D. student based at the University of Hong Kong, Department of Comparative Literature. Prior to this, she was a media and cultural studies lecturer at Temasek Polytechnic, School of Design, Singapore. Last year, with Lilian Soon, she organized Singapore's Animation Fiesta.

Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation

Book review by Fred Patten

The publisher's press release says, "*Samurai from Outer Space* is the first book-length discussion of the suddenly terrifically popular genre of Japanese animation." That is misleading. In fact, the book itself cites and highly recommends the earlier *The Complete Anime Guide*. But the *Guide* concentrates on individual anime titles, with a title-by-title history of the growth of anime in America from 1963 to the present. Where *Samurai from Outer Space* breaks new ground is that it is the first detailed discussion of the popular-culture sociology of anime.

Author Antonia Levy is a former resident of Japan who is a specialist in its culture, with a doctorate in Japanese history. She has taught Japanese history at American colleges, and has actively participated in their campus anime fan clubs. She is interested in anime in its own right, but is also fascinated by the reasons for its enthusiastic acceptance, despite a general American ignorance of the cultural background needed to fully understand the stories. *Samurai from Outer Space* is primarily an analysis of this phenomenon.

The book is skillfully written to appeal to both the anime neophyte and the knowledgeable

fan. Levy's introduction notes the spreading popularity of anime. "National video franchises like Blockbuster Video devote an entire section to *anime* even in small rural towns, and the number of their offerings is growing fast. . . . Almost every college campus has at least a small *anime* club. Over four hundred of them maintain elaborate home pages on the World Wide Web." The reason, she quotes its fans, is that, "*anime's* charm lies in its unpredictability, its off-beat weird-

ness that makes you stop and think about things you never even noticed before."

The main text analyzes and explains these weirdnesses in broad categories. Chapter Two, "Disney in a Kimono," covers the differences in general movie and TV cartoon-art styling between American and Japanese animation. Why Japanese cartoon characters have such big eyes. Why they have pastel-colored hair or otherwise "don't look Japanese." The importance of the fact that Japanese animation evolved from dramatic theater and literature, rather than from the comedic as in America. "In content and style, *anime* also draws heavily on Japanese literary traditions. This is particularly telling in *anime* television series. Unlike American TV which is episodic and fairly static in terms of character development, *anime* created for Japanese television are serial and draw as much of their appeal from character development as from plot. . . . the serial nature of television dramas . . . allow it ample time to expand on character development. This also gives *anime* its distinctive moral ambiguity. Since human beings change over time, it's only natural that some villains will reform and become





"Why do anime characters have such big eyes?" and other such mysteries are explained in Levi's book.

Image from Tenchi Muyo, © 1993
A.I.C./Pioneer LDC, Inc.

heroes, while some heroes will turn out to have feet of clay." In other words, one of the main facets of anime's appeal is that much of it is action-adventure soap opera. Is it really news to anyone in America that soap operas can be very popular?

Japanese animation evolved from dramatic theater and literature, rather than from the comedic as in America.

Gods and Demons

Chapters Three ("Other Gods, Other Demons") and Four ("Other Heroes, Other Villains") discuss the influences in anime of Oriental concepts of religion and mythology, and cultural attitudes toward heroics and villainy (which is subtly different from right and wrong). Many of the aliens and monsters in anime science-fiction adventures are thinly-disguised, well-known (in Japan) gods and demons. The Oriental traditions of divinity are closer to the Norse or Greek pantheons, with many gods who embody humanity's personality flaws and often quarrel among each other. The Japanese

are also accustomed to a society in which the government and the privileged classes have traditionally been indifferent to or contemptuous of the masses. This is why anime heroes usually pledge themselves to abstract ideals such as loyalty and self-sacrifice rather than to a divinity or to an individual leader. "Losing and therefore gaining nothing confirms the hero's altruism and renders his or her sacrifice all the more tragic. As a result, it is quite possible to portray a young kamikaze pilot as a hero without necessarily endorsing the agenda of the Japanese fascists. Indeed, almost all Japanese portrayals of the war include very unflattering depictions of the leadership." There are comparisons between the use of such themes in anime titles and in popular American movies and TV series such as *Star Trek* to illustrate the subtle differences.

Other chapters examine robots and similar science-fictional *mecha*, attitudes towards death (including the differences between honorable and dishonorable suicide), and the portrayal of women in leading roles as either heroines or *femmes fatale*. A final chapter cites examples of how influences from anime are beginning to show up in American comic books, TV and movies, as proof that anime is having an impact. "Trading comic books and cartoons may not be what educators had in mind when they argued in favor of multiculturalism. But it's a beginning and it's not a bad beginning at that." The book concludes with three appendices: one of addresses of anime specialty magazines, shops, and anime fan conventions; one of recommended readings of books on anime and on Japanese popular culture; and a glossary of anime terms. There is also a detailed index.

Anime's charm lies in its unpredictability, its off-beat weirdness that makes you stop and think about things you never even noticed before.

Samurai from Outer Space is excellent as both a primer on anime for those who are just being introduced to it, and as an explanation of the background to Japanese cultural stereotypes (such as those Big Eyes) for the fans who are fascinated by their exotic aspects and want to know their significance. The only problems are in small errors related to specific titles. Levi says that the first anime to appear on American TV was *Astro Boy* in 1964, when it actually premiered in 1963. A couple of minor titles are consistently misspelled. The color plates are beautiful but notably pixillated, as though printed from enlarged color faxes or "video screen captures" rather than from clear film transparencies. A book with so few flaws is close to perfect.

Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation. by **Antonia Levy**. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1996. 169 pages, illustrated. Trade paperback, \$18.95; ISBN: 0-8126-9332-9.

Fred Patten has written on anime for fan and professional magazines since the late 1970s. He currently writes a regular anime column for Animation Magazine.



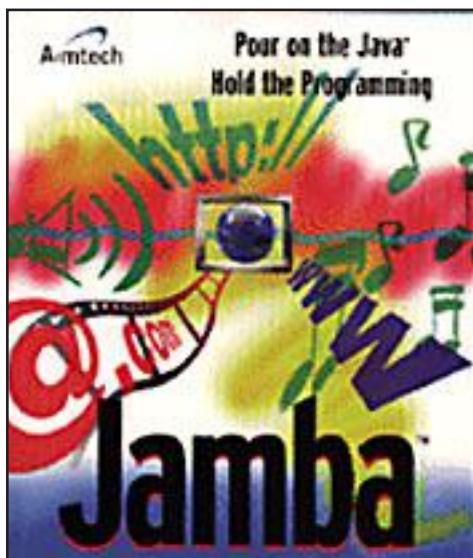
Java Software Reviews

by John Parazette-Tillar

The online world is saturated with the buzzword "Java." It seems if the site you're viewing isn't enhanced with a Java applet, it's just another web page. I've recently been thrown to the lions of convention, and have started looking at the various ways to make a web site stand out in the sea of online publishing. When attempting to add interactivity to a site, one has various options, each with its trade-offs and limitations. Macromedia's Shockwave for Director allows one to re-purpose, compress and stream Director files, but a plug-in is required for viewing. Previously, my level of interactivity was limited to Shockwave, HTML coding, and GIF animations.

Boy, have my eyes been opened now that I have entered the "Java-Zone!" Java and Java script allow the implementation of cross-platform mini-applications called "applets" that allow users to interact with a web page, view animations, receive feedback to their input, and generally create a more intimate connection with the content provided, but at the cost of time for the downloading of the Java application files. As a graphic designer and creative type, I shuddered at the prospect of learning a programming language. My skin crawled at the sight of "IF-THEN..." statements! But, now there's no need to fear the "J" word anymore! There are a plethora of Java authoring tools entering the market that

allow us graphically-inclined mere mortals to create cool Java applets, without having to know the slightest bit of code. This month, I'm testing out two products designed to make Java accessible to the average user, Aimtech's Jamba (Windows only) and Power Production's WebBurst (Mac only).



Jamba: Pour on the Java... Hold the Programming

Jamba is a new software package from Aimtech, a company whose claim to fame is authoring applications such as Icon Author and CBT Express, known to many for the deployment of interactive multimedia via CD-ROM, corporate based training, and the Internet. Jamba gives web-developers a very powerful tool to execute Java applets, and maintain the ability to stay at the forefront of the ever-changing technological Internet revolution.

Before you hard-core, bit-crunching, programmer types run for the hills crying "Foull," let it be known that Jamba will satisfy even the most hardy of you. Included in the Java authoring environment are the application, Jamba objects, Jamba templates, Java player, sample Java applets, and Jamba tutorial. My favorite feature is Imagelab, a stand-alone image manipulation program that I would be so bold as to call a mini-Photoshop, "Rosetta Stone" for online images. Imagelab has the ability to view, resize, crop, reduce colors, rotate, flip, manipulate palettes, create albums (groups of images that represent bitmap graphics,) display slide shows, and convert 31 different file formats. It even slices, dices, and makes julienne fries! (well, almost.)

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All in all, Aimtech has really tried to provide web authors with a complete "web authoring environment". Creating a Java applet in Jamba is, to twist the old adage, "much easier to do than say." After opening the application, and selecting the "create a new project" option, you are allowed to name and define the page size, which Jamba then creates as a start page. Double-clicking on the start page icon opens

the page layout editor, in which you then create objects and set the parameters for their actions/interactions. Objects are the main building blocks of a Jamba application. They can be push-button objects (next, ok, go to,) graphic objects or display GIF and JPEG graphics. Special effects enable wipes, dissolves, and cel-style animation. From fades to iris wipes, there are so many pre-defined object modifiers that appear in the various pop-up menus that you just have to see it to believe it. Two drawbacks of Jamba are that there is no way to move objects along a path, and that it does not include an HTML editor (but, being a very personal choice, it was probably a good idea to leave the HTML editor out.)

After you have finished creating your work of art, you select the file option "save all," then "play application" from the toolbar button, and your new application is played back in a separate window. Then it's ready to be distributed as-is, or dropped into an existing web page. In addition to viewing through any Java-enabled web browser (Netscape, Internet Explorer, etc...) you can also distribute your applet with Jamba's proprietary application viewer, Jamba Java Player.

Bottom line: you've got to get this application if you want to add serious Java interactivity to your web site. Jamba truly is Java for us creative types, without the limits of the usual wizard-based programs. As Aimtech says, this program lets you "Pour on the Java, hold the programming." At a list price of \$295.00, and seen available for as little as \$189.00, Jamba is fairly accessible to web authors wanting to add these new-fangled options for interactivity and multimedia to

their sites. Unfortunately, at this time, Jamba v1.1.25 is available for Windows 95/NT only. Come on, Aimtech, this is a program that Mac users would love to have!



WebBurst

Could it actually be? Creating Java applets without the programming? Well, the people at Power Production Software seem to think that this would be a boon to the non-coding masses that want to use the power of Java, yet circumvent learning a programming language. The product of this revelation is *WebBurst*, and if you want to easily and quickly create interaction between you and John Q. Webuser, this might just be the ticket.

Installation of the software takes up only 2MB of your cherished hard drive space, and only a few moments of your time. Thanks to a great little manual and an easy to comprehend tutorial, you will grasp the fundamentals of the program in a matter of minutes. The easy-to-use, intuitive interface allows one who is design, rather than programming-oriented to jump right and get started. The display consists of a menu bar, an applet frame window, library and color palettes, action control, object and main tool bars, and a message window. The applet frame window is the heart

of the display, where you drag and drop picture and sound files to put together your applet. Importable file formats include graphic files in PICT (w/ alpha channel,) PICT series, GIF, series GIF, animated GIF, PICS and TEXT, and audio files in AIFF and SND. In a pinch, you can also use the drawing tools in the main toolbar to create new content.

Once your files are in the window, the action control palette allows you to activate and experiment with almost any action or condition that Java allows, assigning behaviors such as animation paths, actions in the form of stern or stop sounds and animations, hide/show options, links, conditional branching and data fields. The library palette, which gives you instant access to your artwork, is easy to create; dragging and dropping a folder of images on to the applet frame window creates a grid which can contain up to 120 images. These libraries save disk space, being stored only once, regardless of how many times the images are accessed in your project. You can also substitute an image on the grid, and retain the attributes that were applied to the previous image.

As a graphic designer and creative type, I shuddered at the prospect of learning a programming language.

Once you're satisfied with its action, you then proceed to the file option "export to Java-powered applet." This is where the true power and ease of WebBurst becomes apparent. Without any further efforts on your part, all of your interactivity is translated to Java byte code, the images saved as compressed GIFs, and the sound files to

AU format. To view your handiwork, just drag and drop the resulting HTML page onto your Java-enabled browser (Netscape, Internet Explorer) and "thar she blows!"

Overall, WebBurst is a great program for a designer who has better things to do than learn code. Yet it is also powerful enough for programmers who want to quickly create a Java applet and retain the ability to tweak code. In their inimitable wisdom, Power Production has also included in the WebBurst package a "back door," in the form of an API that allows a programmer to write any Java code and run it as a WebBurst applet. The list price is \$299.00, but it is being sold for as low as \$199.00. WebBurst version 1.2 is a Mac-only product, but the forthcoming 2.0 version will be cross-platform for Mac and Windows 95/NT with enhanced image, text, and sound integration. Other features will include the ability to use Adobe Photoshop plug-ins, more powerful animation control, a new asset vault maker, more interactivity control, optimized instant Java output, more built-in CGI functionality, and easier to implement database connectivity.

John Parazette-Tillar has a background in multimedia graphic design. He studied at the American Film Institute and Cal State Long Beach. He has been known to dream digitally, and can make any pixel "Twist and Shout!" When not joined at the hip to his workstations, he can be found hangin' at the park with his understanding wife, Kate, and his unusually cool son, Zachary.

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NEWS

Compiled by Wendy Jackson

Business

Hollywood Shuffle. Abby Terkhule has been named president of MTV Animation, a role in which he will oversee all operations of MTV's New York animation studio, including TV series, promotions and feature films. Terkhule was formerly executive vice president and creative director of MTV Animation, a role in which he was responsible for the development of *Liquid Television* and oversaw development of animated properties from "Beavis & Butt-head" to *The Maxx*. . . . Stephen Brand has left his post as lead animator at Warner Digital to become 3-D supervisor at Four Media's computer graphics arm, Digital Magic. . . . Henry Anderson has joined Blue Sky Studios as director of animation, leaving his position as consultant Digital Domain. A 1988 CalArts graduate, Anderson has worked previously with Rhythm & Hues, Brøderbund Software, PDI, Pixar, Disney, and Warner Bros. . . . Nickelodeon Productions has promoted three executives as part of their commitment to creating original animated programming: Marjorie Cohn to vice president and executive producer of current series, Kevin Kay to vice president and executive producer of development and Brown Johnson to senior vice president of Nick Jr. . . . Karen Flischel has been promoted to managing director for Nickelodeon Europe in London. She was formerly CEO of Nickelodeon Australia.

Cinar Opens Euro Division.

Canadian family entertainment company, Cinar Films has launched Cinar Europe, a new division aimed to increase production and sales in Europe. The new London office will utilize FilmFair, the British animation studio acquired by Cinar last year for \$17 million. Heading up the new division is Vice President David Ferguson, who joins Cinar from Nelvana, where he was director of international co-productions for four years. Meanwhile, Cinar is making moves to acquire an educational publisher, and have already bid on a U.S. publishing company, which shall remain unnamed until an official acquisition is announced.



Abby Terkhule.

Humongous Development Deal.

Seattle-based children's software publisher, Humongous Entertainment is partnering with

New York-based Lancit Media Entertainment to develop their family of animated CD-ROM characters for television, motion picture, merchandising and home video. CD-ROM games featuring Humongous' original characters Putt-Putt, Pajama Sam and Freddi the Fish have sold more than 3 million units worldwide. Humongous Entertainment is a division of GT Interactive, and Lancit Media is a producer of children's programming such as *Puzzle Place* and *Reading Rainbow*.

Aardman Rakes It In Online.

Aardman Animation has received more than £200,000 (about US\$300,000) in orders for animation-related merchandise sold through their World Wide Web site, proof positive that the Internet is a viable and profitable means for product distribution. Wallace and Gromit figurines, toys and accessories can be purchased from anywhere in the world at the Aardman Web site, accessible through AWN (www.awn.com), in the Companies section of the Animation Village.

Features

Aardman's On A "Chicken Run."

Oscar-winning Aardman Animations is moving towards an anticipated September production startup on their first animated feature film, now in development at their Bristol, England based studio. *Chicken Run* will be a stop-motion animated comedy feature about two chickens, Rocky and Ginger, and their attempt at a "prisoner of war" type



Enzo D'Alò's *La Freccia Azzurra*.

escape from a farm in the 1950s. The screenplay was written by Jack Rosenthal, and based on a story being developed by Peter Lord and Nick Park since 1995. *Chicken Run* will be co-directed by Lord and Park, and produced by Aardman in association with Allied FilmMakers, with Jake Eberts (*James and the Giant Peach*) as executive producer. Aardman is in the process of talking to several U.S. studios about distribution for the film, which we can expect to be released towards the end of 1998.

Blue Arrow Heads For Miramax.

Disney-owned Miramax has acquired all rights to Enzo D'Alò's Italian animated feature film *The Blue Arrow* (see review *La Freccia Azzurra* in 1/97 issue of *Animation World Magazine*), as was recently announced during *Cartoons on the Bay in Amalfi*. Miramax paid \$1 million to control all rights for U.S., U.K. and other previously unsold territories. Produced by La Laterna Magica last year, *The Blue Arrow* is the first animated feature film produced in Italy in the past 20 years. It has not yet been announced when or how Miramax will release the film.

RAI To Animate Italian Pinnocchio.

Italian broadcaster RAI has announced plans to produce an animated feature of *Pinnocchio*, with *La Freccia Azzurra* director Enzo D'Alò directing on the project. The film is scheduled to premiere in Italy at the same time as the Italian release of Disney's animated feature *Hercules*. Meanwhile, RAI has also announced that it will launch a children's programming satellite channel in Italy next September.

Goodtime Rudolph Feature Is Golden.

Goodtimes Entertainment and Golden Books Family Entertainment are teaming up to co-produce an animated feature film make of *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer*. The film is scheduled for December 1998 release, and production will begin this spring with a budget of \$10 million. The two companies also plan to produce a "full range of products in all key categories designed to reach consumer markets worldwide," says Goodtime president Andrew Greenberg. Golden Books also owns the rights to the classic Rankin-Bass television special of the same

name, which is the longest running, highest rated special on network television.

Warners Options Nanobots.

Warner Bros. has optioned the rights to a feature film project by writers Roger Soffer and Christian Ford. *Nanobots*, as the project is called, will be at least partially computer animated, and co-produced with Left Bank Productions.

Merv Griffin Gets Huge Rights.

Merv Griffin Entertainment has acquired rights to the comic strip character Howard Huge, created by artist Bunny Hoest. The comic strip *Howard Huge* has appeared in *Parade* magazine for over 15 years. Griffin, currently looking for a writer hopes to develop the property into a feature film, although it has not yet been determined whether it would be live action or animated.

Television

KidsTV Audience Declining.

The results of the February sweeps indicate a 4%-6% drop in viewing levels for children's programming on network television. Analysts say that this decline is most likely the result of kids' increased interest in home computers, as well as the domination of cable channels such as Nickelodeon, The Disney Channel and Cartoon Network. With increased cable and even Internet-based programming, this trend is likely to continue. Otherwise in the sweeps, national standings landed "The Simpsons" as the number six-rated show in the country, the only animated series in the top ten.

Happily Ever After For HBO.

The second season of HBO's multicultural children's series *Happily Ever*



Happily Ever After

After: Fairy Tales for Every Child started on April 13, with 13 new episodes of multicultural fairy tales for modern day kids. Co-produced by Two Oceans Entertainment, Confetti Entertainment and Hyperion Studio, the series was produced by Libby Simon and directed by Ed Bell. Episodes feature voice parts by many well known actors such as Dean Cain, Wesley Snipes and Edward James Olmos. Cultural Toys Co. is producing a line of merchandising for the series, and Gryphon Software is producing related CD-ROM games, and Kid Rhino/ KIDS WB Music are releasing a soundtrack CD of songs from the series.

UNICEF Developing TV Series.

In collaboration with TFO, UNICEF is developing *Generation 2000*, a new animated TV series based on child rights. The 13-part series will present personal stories of various children throughout the world, focusing on such issues as children in war, hazardous child labor, child prostitution, girls' education, and the environment and health. Meanwhile, more than 60 companies are in production on or have completed 30 second animated

public service announcements as part of UNICEF's International Animation Consortium for Child Rights.

Energee Eats Pudding.

Australian animation production group Energee Entertainment has acquired exclusive development and merchandising rights to *Magic Pudding*, a classic children's book by Norman Lindsay, first published in 1918. Contemporary children's book author Morris Gleitzman is lined up to write the screenplay adaptation to make an animated feature. The rights acquisition comes after five years of negotiations, and is presented to Energee, beating out Disney, Ralph Bakshi and Jim Henson Productions, who had also bid for the rights. Nomura/Jafco investment owns a 40% stake in Energee, who will be seeking international investors and distributors during MIP TV in Cannes next week.

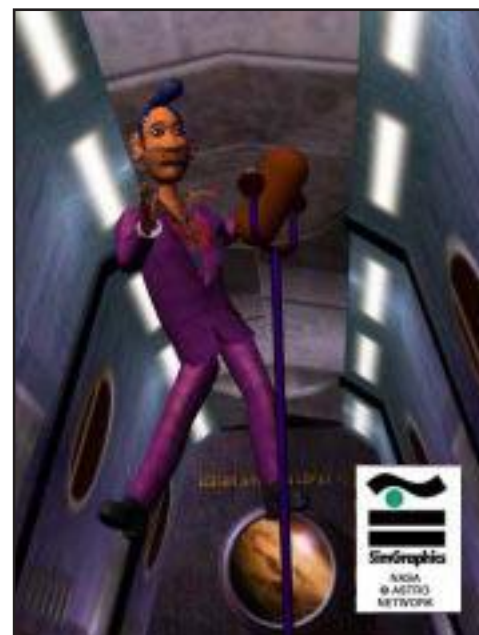
Real-Time Animated Malay Host.

Pasadena-based SimGraphics recently presented their real-time animated character, Nasa, as host of the 1997 Malaysian Music Awards. The 2-1/2 hour program, broadcast through Asia's Astro

Network satellite service, was hosted entirely by the computer-generated character, live and in real time to the voice of singer Afdlin Shauki.

Bohbot's Un-Dangerous

Dinosaurs. Bohbot Entertainment and Mattel Toys recently announced a name change for their new animated series and accompanying toy line. The show formerly known as *Dangerous Dinosaurs* is being changed to *Extreme Dinosaurs*. This is most likely an effort to make the properties more marketable to a wider group of kids and their parents, and is similar to the name change for the UK distribution of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* to *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* a few years back. "The essence of this property," says Gene Garlock, vice president of entertainment & licensing at Mattel, "is not in the name, but rather in the unique characters, dynamic toy design, excellent stories and superior animation." *Extreme Dinosaurs* will be packaged as part of the "Extreme Hour" on the Bohbot Kids Network, alongside *Extreme Ghostbusters*. Bohbot has signed up 104 station affiliates for



SimGraphics' animated character, Nasa.

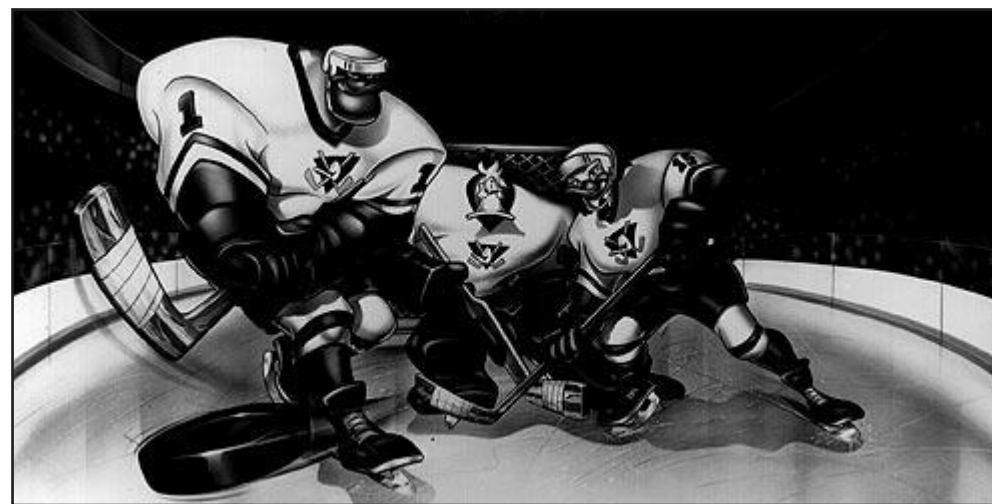
their Bohbot Kids Network program block, covering 75% of the US market, and making them the sixth largest supplier of children's programming in the US.

Locomotion Adds New Programs. South American 24-hour animation cable channel, Locomotion has added four new animated programs to its lineup, including *Denver The Last Dinosaur* and *Dinky Dog*, for family audiences, and *Cool McCool* and *Red Baron*, for more mature audiences of teenagers and young adults. Cushioning the evening programs are a pair of new interstitial station id's created by animator Webster Colcord just before he started working at Pacific Data Images.

Home Video

Mighty Ducks Movie Released.

Walt Disney Home Video debuted the *Mighty Ducks the Movie: The First Face-Off*, in stores on April 8. Based on the Saturday morning ABC animated series, the 66 minute animated "featurette" showcases character voices by Tim Curry, Jim Belushi and Ian Zierling. The animation was created referencing live-action hockey footage, as well as through extensive use of CG



Mighty Ducks the Movie: The First Face-Off. © Disney

imagery to recreate the interior of a skating arena.

Manga Releases Macross Feature.



Olive Jar's Cheesehead.

Worldwide anime distributor Manga Entertainment will release Shoji Kawamori's *Macross Plus* feature film, on video this month. The film, the latest in the *Macross* series, features traditional and computer-generated animation, and is said to be the most expensive direct-to-video release ever to come out of Japan.

Commercials

Cheese Head In An Olive Jar.

Boston-based Olive Jar Animation recently completed *Cheese Head*, a cel and cut-out animated commercial for Stella Foods, in association with the agency Margeoleos Fertitta & Partners. The 30 second spot has a bold graphic style, story

line and soundtrack inspired by 70s urban action films such as *Shaft*, but with a twist; the main character, named Cheese Head, is a string cheese snack-cum superhero in search of hungry kids. Matthew Charde was executive producer and the director was Dan Sousa.

A Colossal Discovery.

San Francisco-based (Colossal) Pictures recently completed a set of three animated station IDs for The Discovery Channel, promoting their Saturday morning kids programming block. Aimed at the "tween" audience ranging from age 8-13, the 15 second spots, titled *Experiment*, feature classroom scenes animated in a colorful, fun style. The executive producer on the spots was Jana Canellos, the creative director was George Evelyn, the animation director was Tom Rubalcava, and the ink and paint was completed by Click 3 West.

Acme Goes To The Beach For Weight Watchers.

A third spot in



(Colossal) Pictures' Experiment

Weight Watchers' high-profile animated advertising campaign has recently been completed by Acme Filmworks' director Sue Loughlin for Lowe & Partners/SMS agency in New York. *Brenda and Elaine at the Beach* features the two signature female characters afraid to go in the water for fear of being seen in their



Curious Pictures' *Eenie, Meenie, Minie, Oni*.

bathing suits. The 30 second spot premiered nationally during the Academy Awards ceremony broadcast at the end of March.

Curious Gets Cheesy. New York-based Curious Pictures recently completed a 30 second spot for Kraft Foods through Foote, Cone & Belding. The commercial, titled *Eenie, Meenie, Minie, Oni*, introduces the Kraft Macaroni & Cheese CG animated mascot, Cheesasaurus Rex, that was produced using SGI Alias Wavefront and Macintosh After Effects programs. *Eenie* was directed by staple Curious director Steve Oakes.

Perlman, Olive Jar Buzzing For MCI. Boston-based Olive Jar Studios recently completed *Bees*, a commercial for MCI Cellular which is inspired by 1970s educational nature films. The 30 second spot features 2-D animation sequences by animation director Janet Perlman, who is perhaps best known for her independent films.

Viewpoint On Toys. Boston-based animation/effects facility, ViewPoint Studios recently created 3-D animation and optical effects sequences for a series of commercials for Playskool's "Makes it Magic" toy campaign. Animator Michael Leonne created the 3-D animation

for the project, which was produced by Redtree Productions. The spots will air in the U.S. this summer.

Designfx Goes Bananas. Atlanta-based Designfx helped Dole Bananas launch a new animated advertising campaign with *Broadway* and *Skateboard*, two new 30 second animation/live-action spots featuring the company's new spokesperson. . . . er spokesbanana, Bobby Banana. Featuring both cel and CG 3-D character animation, the spots were directed by Steve Walker, whose production team used Alias Wavefront's PowerAnimator and VideoComposer.

Ink Tank In Outer Space. New York-based animation studio, The Ink Tank, created *Spaceman*, a 30 second animated spot for Banco Popular. The commercial's sharp, graphic style portrays a spaceship colliding with an asteroid, to the tune of Elton John's *Rocket Man*. R.O Blechman directed for the Badillo Nazca/Saatchi & Saatchi agency.

Interactive & Internet



Designfx's Bobby Banana character for Dole.

IDSA Reports Industry Growth. While competition is resulting in the downsizing of the interactive entertainment industry, overall sales seem to be up. This is according to a new

report released by the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), the trade organization that presents the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), which will take place this June in Atlanta. According to the report, the interactive software industry experienced a strong growth in 1996, with overall sales up 16% from the previous year, specifically video game software sales were up 14% to \$2 billion, and sales of games for personal computers up 19% to \$1.7 billion. The study, released by IDSA president Douglas Lowenstein, cites data gathered from NPD, a market research company based in New York.

Electronic Arts Expands.

California-based interactive entertainment giant Electronic Arts (EA) is expanding its development and distribution efforts by acquiring rights and interests in several companies. EA has made an investment in Accolade Inc., a privately-held interactive game publisher; this deal includes a multiyear affiliated label agreement, under which EA will have exclusive distribution rights for all new and certain existing software titles produced by Accolade. EA has signed Colorado-based game developer Anark to an exclusive distribution agreement, as well as an affiliated label agreement, which will begin with this summer's release of *Galapagos*, Anark's first title. EA has also just signed an exclusive distribution deal with DreamWorks Interactive (DWI), specifically of video game titles for Sony PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and Sega Saturn platforms. Microsoft will keep distribution rights to DWI's CD-ROM titles (e.g., *The Neverhood*.)

Disney Invests In Starwave. The Walt Disney Company has pur-

chased an interest in Starwave Corp., a major Internet content developer. Approximately \$100 million was paid by Disney for what is believed to be a one-third stake in Starwave, which is owned by billionaire Paul Allen, who will remain the biggest stockholder in the company. Together with Netscape, America Online and ABC, they will launch a 24 hour Internet news network this month.

Disney Offers Subscription Online Service. Disney Online unveiled their new *Disney's Daily Blast*, a subscriber-based Web site and Internet service, aimed at children ages 3-12. The comics, games and youth-oriented news provided through the service are available at \$4.95 per month exclusively through the Microsoft Network.

Pixar Closes Interactive Division. Pixar Animation Studios officially announced that they will be getting out of the interactive business, shortly after the recent closing of their ten year, five picture deal with Disney. The division, which produced two CD-ROM titles, *Toy Story Animated Storybook* and *Toy Story Activity Center*, will "redirect its valuable talent" into other areas of the company.

VRMLOCITY Conference. Miller Freeman, organizers of the recent New Animation Technology Expo (NATE,) will present a full day seminar devoted to Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML) implementation, during their second annual 3-D Design Conference in San Francisco, June 2-6, 1997. The seminar will cover technical topics involved in creating virtual worlds, such as building avatars and environments with CGI programs.

Animation Art

Virgil Ross Honored In Limited Edition. American Royal Arts has announced the release of a limited edition lithograph honoring veteran animator Virgil Ross, who passed away last May. Hand-signed by Virgil Ross himself, the artwork features classic Looney Tunes characters which Ross animated in more than 230 cartoon shorts for Warner Bros. For information, call 1-800-888-9449.

Festivals & Events

ANIMEXPO Competition Open. The first International Animation Expo will be taking place July 25 to August 3 in Seoul, Korea. In addition to an international market and trade fair exhibition, animation workshops, and retrospective screenings, AnimExpo will include a competition of animated films. Prizes for award winning films will amount to \$120,000.00. Entries are being considered for competition until April 30, in eight categories including commercials, feature films, and a special category for the theme of the festival, "Nature and Dreams." Entry forms can be downloaded from the AnimExpo website, accessible from the AWN Calendar of Events.

<http://www.awn.com/awneng/village/calendar.html>

Leipzig Call For Entries. The 40th International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Films is scheduled to take place October 28-November 2, 1997 in Leipzig, Germany. Several prizes are awarded for animation, including over 27,000 DM in cash prizes. Entries should be sent on VHS video cassette by September 5 to Dokfestival Leipzig, Elsterstr. 22-24, 04109

Leipzig, Germany.

Animation Program At Philadelphia Fest. The Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, taking place in Pennsylvania, will present a screening of animated films programmed by animators/teachers David Fain and Sheila Sofian. The hand-picked collection, entitled *Invented Worlds*, will include recent films by Piet Kroon, Aleksandra Korejwo, Anthony Hodgson, Anna Dudek, Dominic Carola, Bill Lebeda, Paul Driessen, Yvonne Andersen, Tyron Montgomery, Tim Hittle and others. Screenings are scheduled for May 2 and 4 at the International House theater. For information call (800) WOW-PFWC.

Richard Williams Masterclass. Richard Williams, regarded by many in the industry as a modern master of animation, will offer an "Animation Masterclass" June 6-8 in San Francisco. The three day workshop will teach the basics of classical animation. Triple Oscar winner Richard Williams has won over 250 international awards including three Hollywood and three British Academy Awards. His films include *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *The Christmas Carol*, and *The Return of The Pink Panther*, as well as the original *Thief and the Cobbler* animated feature.. Having trained many of today's leading animators worldwide, Williams has passed on his knowledge at master classes in London, Wales, Denmark, Vancouver and at Warner Bros in Hollywood. Further information is available by phone (250)-653-4502.

Digital Seminar For Artists. Silicon Studio L.A., the Silicon Graphics training facility in Santa Monica, California, will address one of the issues facing many tradition-

al animators today, by presenting a discussion/seminar entitled "Paint to Pixels: Traditional Artists in the Digital Age," as part of its "Digital Coffeehouse" series. Aimed at helping artists make the transition to digital, the seminar will feature various industry professionals experienced in both traditional and digital media. The event will take place on June 5 in Santa Monica, admission is \$25 in advance.

Awards

Svankmajer to Receive Lifetime Achievement Award.

The San Francisco International Film Festival will honor legendary Czech filmmaker Jan Svankmajer with the Golden Gate Award for Persistence of Vision on May 6. The award is given to directors who are notable for "working outside the bounds of traditional filmmaking," which describes Svankmajer well, as he is best known for his surrealist mixed-media films, which range in technique from stop-motion to cut-out, and most recently, live action. His most recent feature-length film, *The Conspirators of Pleasure* will be screened during the award ceremony taking place at the AMC Kabuki theater. Tickets are available by calling (415) 441-7373.

Cartoons on the Bay 2

The animation business conference and competition which premiered last year in Amalfi, Italy took place for a second time April 5-9. Out of 58 productions in competition, nine were awarded with prizes, including the "Golden Pulcinella" grand prize for best series of the year to *Link* by Canada's Animation Ciné Group, and for best character of the year to *Rotten Ralph* by American John Matthews Productions. A complete list of award winners can be

found on the Cartoons On The Bay web site in the AWN Animation Village.

<http://www.awn.com/cartoonsbay>

Discussions of turning Cartoons on the Bay into an official market such as MIP or MIFA have been put away for now, with a decision from event organizers (SACIS) to present an animation-themed "sales showcase" at the existing MIFED film market in Milan. A screening of the 1997 Cartoons on the Bay competition films will also take place as a sidebar event during MIFED, which will take place October 19-24.

ASIFA-East Animation Festival

The annual animation festival of the Eastern U.S. chapter of ASIFA took place April 3 at New York's New School Tishman Library Theater. About 300 people showed up for the ceremony, which was hosted by ASIFA-East president Linda Simensky. The winning films were selected by a jury comprised of

approximately 50 ASIFA-East members who screened all of the entries over a two-night period. Simensky notes that "it's really the only festival where the jury is comprised of one's peers." And the winners are...

- Best Film: *Champagne* by Michael Sporn
- Best Film Under Two Minutes: *Voice B Gone* by David Wasson

Student Awards

- First Prize : *The Tapir* by Raquel Coelho
- Second Prize: *Season's Greetings* by Michael Dougherty
- Third Prize: *The Stomach Pump* by Adam Dotson
- First Honorable Mention: *Human Area - Slow Speed* by Patty Yang
- Second Honorable Mention: *Rain For Us* by Glenn Hall

Professional Films Under Two Minutes
Direction Category



AmpNYC's Rupert the Grouper.

- First Prize: *Rupert the Grouper* by AmpNYC Animation Studio
- Second Prize: *Smell the Flowers* by Bill Plympton
- Third Prize: *Sandwich* by Raimund Krumme/Acme Filmworks

Animation Category

- First Prize: *Three Little Pigs* by John Kricfalusi/Acme Filmworks
- Second Prize: *Monkey Business* by Christoph and Wolfgang Lauenstein/Acme Filmworks
- Third Prize: *Season* by Aleksandra Korejwo/Acme Filmworks

Design Category

- First Prize: *Singer* by Carlos Aponte/The Ink Tank
- Second Prize: *Zoom* by Istvan Banyai
- Third Prize: *Impressions* by Aleksandra Korejwo/Acme Filmworks

Professional Films Two Minutes And Over

Direction Category

- First Prize: *The Off-beats: September's Day Off* by Mo Willems
- Second Prize: *Talking About Sex: A Guide For Families* by Candy Kugel and Vincent Cafarelli/Buzzco Associates
- Third Prize: *The Kitchen Casanova* by John McIntyre/Hanna-Barbera Cartoons

Animation Category

- First Prize: *Noodles and Nedd* by John Dilworth/Stretch Films
- Second Prize: *The Off-Beats: Tommy's Coat* by Mo Willems and Karen Villareal
- Third Prize: *The Blind Men and the Elephant*, Debby Solomon and Ken

- Kimmelman/Pharoh Films

Design Category

- First Prize: *Menaseh's Dream* by Maciek Albrecht/The Ink Tank
- Second Prize: *Troubles the Cat: Cutey Kitty* by Santiago Cohen/The Ink Tank
- Third Prize: *Robot Rerun* by David Ehrlich

Concept Category

- First Prize: *Girl With Her Head Coming Off* by Emily Hubley
- Second Prize: *State of the Union* by J.J. Sedelmaier Productions
- Third Prize: *Clinton/Dole* by J.J. Sedelmaier Productions

Soundtrack Category

- First Prize: *Once Upon a Time* by John Serpentelli and Robert Moran
- Second Prize: *X-Presidents* by J.J. Sedelmaier Productions
- Third Prize: *Time Lapse* by Bob Lyons

Special Awards

- Charles Samu Award: *Menaseh's Dream* by Maciek Albrecht
- Charles Samu Award Honorable Mention: *Noodles and Nedd* by John R. Dilworth
- Special Award for Continuing Support of Independent Animated Film: Adrienne Mancia

World Animation Celebration

The World Animation Celebration (WAC) took place last week in Pasadena, with an impressive international attendance that included all four Academy Award nominees. The enormous competition featured 40 different categories, with films selected from more than 1,000 films submitted from 93 countries. While Animation World Magazine will pub-

lish a full WAC festival report in the May issue, following is a list of the top awards.

- Grand Prize: *Old Lady and the Pigeons* by Les Productions Pascal Blais.
- Best Theatrical Feature Film: *Ghost in the Shell* by Manga Entertainment
- Best Use of Animation as a Special Effect in a Feature Film: *Joe's Apartment: Funky Towel* by Blue Sky Studios.
- Best TV Commercial: *Levi's Primal* by Karen Kelly.
- Best Animated Music Video: *Music for Babies* by Run Wrake.
- Best Showreel: Olive Jar Studios.
- Best Animation Produced for a Daytime Television Series: *The Billiards Pat & Mat Series* by Alfons Mensdorff-Ponilly & Frantisek Vasa.
- Best Animation Produced for a Primetime Series: *Pond Life: Holiday* by Candy Guard.
- Best Direct to Home Video Production: *Disney's Aladdin and the King of Thieves* by Walt Disney Television Animation.
- Best Animation Produced for CD ROM: *Squeezils: The Movies!* by Protozoa, Inc.
- Best Animation Produced for Game Platforms: *The Neverhood* by Douglas Tenaple, Edward Schofield, Mike Dietz, Dreamworks Interactive.
- Best Animation Produced for the Internet: *Absolut Panushka* by TBWA Chiat/Day and Troon Ltd.
- Best Computer Assisted Animation Produced by a Professional: *The End* by Chris Landreth.
- Best Computer Assisted Animation Produced by an Independent: *Law of Averages* by James Duesing.
- Best Stop-Motion Animation Produced by a Professional: *A*

- *Close Shave* by Nick Park, Aardman Animation.
- The Jim Henson Award for Best Stop-Motion Animation Produced by an Independent: *Canhead* by Timothy Hittle.
- Best Work Produced by a Student: *The Wooden Leg* by Darren Doherty & Nick Smith.
- Best First Work Produced by an Independent: *Quest* by Tyron Montgomery.
- Best Animation Produced for Children by a Professional:
- Under 30 Minutes: *Jam the Housesnail* by Fuji TV Network, Robot Communications and Animation Staffroom.
- Best Experimental Animation: *Processor* by Jan Otto Ertesvaag.
- Best Animation Produced for Educational Purposes: *Great Moments in Science: Falling Cats* by Andrew Horne.
- Best Animation Works Shorter Than 5 Minutes: *Torero* by Aleksandra Korewjo.
- Best Animated Works Longer Than 5 Minutes and Shorter Than 15 Minutes: *Stressed* by Karen Kelly.
- Best Animated Work Longer Than 15 minutes and Shorter Than 30 minutes: *The Grey Bearded Lion: The Long Journey* by Andrei Kharjanovsky & Tonino Guerra.
- Best Director of Animation for an Animated Theatrical Feature Film: Mamoru Oshii for *Ghost in the Shell*.
- Best Director of Animation for a TV Commercial: Spike Brandt, Kathleen Helppie-Shipley for Pepsi's *Wile E. Coyote/Deion Sanders*.
- Best Director of Animation for a Daytime Series: Norton Virgien for Nickelodeon's *Rugrats: Naked Tommy*.
- Best Director of Animation for a Primetime Series: Candy Guard for *Pond Life: Holiday*.
- Best Director of Animation for a Direct to Home Video Production: Steve Moore for Walt Disney TV Animation's *Little Redux Riding Hood*.
- Best Director of Animation for a CD-ROM: Ted Mathot for Class 6 Entertainment's *Creature Crunch*.
- Best Director of Animation for a Game Platform: Matthew Samia & Duane Stinnett for Blizzard Entertainment's *Star Craft*.
- Best Performance Animation: *The Boxer Trailer* by Pierre LaChapelle for TFX Animation and Taarna Studios.
- Best Animation Produced for a Simulation of a Theme Park Ride: *Seafari* by Rhythm & Hues.
- The UNICEF Award: *Ex-Child* by Jacques Drouin.

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DESERT ISLAND SERIES

On A Desert Island. . . Commercial Free?

Compiled by Wendy Jackson

This month we asked a few folks involved in animation commercials the classic question: "If you were stranded on a desert island, what ten (animated) films would you want to have with you?" Here's what Ron Diamond, Acme Filmworks' executive producer, Darrell Van Citters, Renegade Animation director, and Paul Vester, Rhythm & Hues director (formerly of his own Speedy Films in London,) came up with.

Ron Diamond's picks:

1. *The Man Who Planted Trees* by Frederic Back.
2. *Harpya* by Raoul Servais.
3. *The Cat Came Back* by Cordell Barker.
4. *The Wrong Trousers* by Nick Park.
5. *Fantasia* by Walt Disney.
6. *Mr. Hulot's Holiday* by Jacques Tati.
7. *It's a Wonderful Life* by Frank Capra.
8. *Woman Finding Love* by Simona Mulazzani and Gianluigi Toccafando.
9. *The Monk and The Fish* by Michael Dudok DeWit.
10. *Duck Amuck* by Chuck Jones.



Paul Vester's favorites:

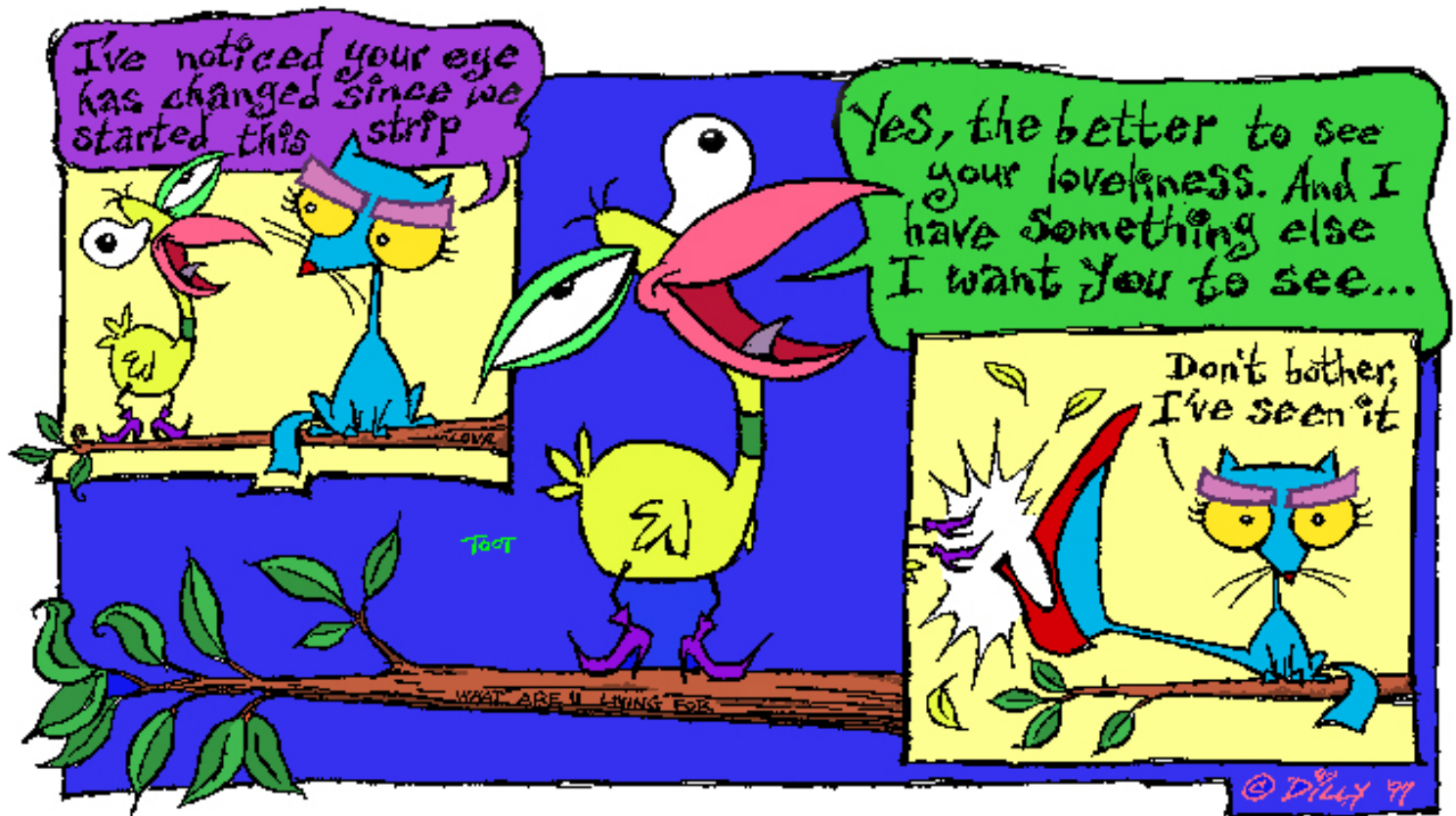
1. *La Salla* by Richard Condie.
2. *Toy Story* by John Lasseter.
3. *Joie de Vivre* by Tony Gross and Hector Hoppin.
4. *Baron Munchausen* by Karel Zeman.
5. *Allegretto* by Oscar Fischinger.
6. *The Wizard of Speed and Time* by Mike Jitlov.
7. *A Dream Walking* by max & Dave Fleischer.
8. *The Toy Soldier* by Paul Grimault.
9. *Slow Bob in the Lower Dimensions* by Henry Selick.
10. *The Mighty River* by Frederick Back.

Darrel Van Citters' selections:

1. *101 Dalmatians* (animated) by Walt Disney.
2. *Coal Black* by Bob Clampett.
3. *Duck Amuck* by Chuck Jones.
4. *Pigs is Pigs* by Walt Disney.
5. *Song of the South* animated sequences by Walt Disney.
6. *Deputy Droopy* by Tex Avery.
7. *Gerald McBoing Boing* by Bob Cannon/UPA.
8. *Rooty Toot Toot* by John Hubley/UPA.
9. *Red Hot Riding Hood* by Tex Avery.
10. *Seaside Woman* by Oscar Grillo.



AWN Comics



The Dirdy Birdy by John R. Dilworth

Highlights from the June Issue...

The June 1997 issue will focus on three very hot topics in the animation industry today; education, training and recruiting. Steve Hulett will offer his view of labor trends from the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists' Union (MPSC Local 839,) and Tammy Glenn will report on what the state of California is doing about the "talent drought." Paul Driessen will present a profile of the Kassel school in Germany. We'll take a look at the Acme Virtual Training Network, Warner Bros. Feature Animations' answer to nationwide training. Also included in this issue will be several surveys of students, schools and recruiters. Topic-related letters to the editor are welcomed at editor@awn.com.

Animation World Magazine 1997 Calendar

Education	(June)
Comics	(July)
Computer Animation	(August)
Television	(September)
